NEPIC INDUSTRY AWARDS

Celebrating the region's best & brightest & supporting STEM education across the North East Chemical-Processing sector.

22.04.2021

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ABOUT THE AWARDS

The NEPIC Annual Awards celebrates the outstanding achievements of the companies and individuals who make up the chemical-processing industries in the North East of England.

This afternoon, during our first virtual awards ceremony, winners and guests alike will enjoy celebrations and networking.

There are 17 awards up for grabs that fall under 11 categories and have a staggering total prize fund of £26,000; £18,000 of which will be donated to local STEM education projects.

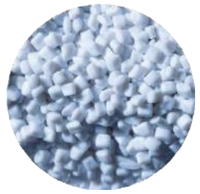
Since the NEPIC Awards commenced 15 years ago, we have hosted more than 5,000 industry leaders at Hardwick Hall. During this time the event has donated a phenomenal total prize fund of £257,000. Sixty local schools have received £156,000 in support of STEM related projects and the region's young stars have received £95,000 between them. A further £6,500 has been donated in support of export mentoring.

This event is only made possible thanks to the tremendous support of our event and award sponsors. We thank you for your time and generosity.

WHO WE ARE……..

Alpek Polyester UK, with its affiliates, are global leaders in the production of polyester based bottling and packaging materials. The 64-acre manufacturing facility at Wilton International is the only PET producer in the UK and supplies nearly 70% of the UK's needs for Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET) resin chips use every year. Its main use is in food & beverage packaging as well as uses in personal protective equipment.

As a Teesside based firm, we have a passion for educating and nurturing the next generation. This is evident in the work we do with various local schools and organisations as well as our continual investment in creating pathways along which employees can progress including apprenticeships and graduate sponsorship.



WHAT WE DO……..

Alpek Polyester produces a variety of PET (chip) for primary use in bottling carbonated soft drinks, water, performance beverages and food packaging. Our PET is fully compliant with European and USA Food Contact and Pharamcopeia legislation and offers reduced energy cost and has one of the lowest carbon footprints.

Our focus is on exceeding customers' needs for sustainable and fully recyclable PET. Not only is PET fully recyclable, its superb packaging properties (light weight, crystal clear and durable) make it ideal for presenting products to their best. The company is working at the forefront of innovative recycling technology to develop the next level of sustainable PET packaging.

www.alpekpolyester.co.uk

APPRENTICE AWARD

Sponsored by Alpek Polyester

NEPIC and award sponsors, Alpek Polyester, are continually seeking to promote the industry as a career choice for those leaving school and, in particular, the apprenticeship route as a training option.

Through these Apprentice Awards, we seek to recognise and celebrate the region's brightest young apprentice talent from within the process sector and its supply chain.

The Apprentice Awards are open to all apprentices of NEPIC member companies, with three winners selected – two from process related apprenticeships and one from a support service apprenticeship.

★ CURRENT WINNER

Sam Longstaff
INFRASTRUCTURE ENGINEER, TEKGEM UK LIMITED

The apprenticeship route offered this year's completed apprentice of the year winner an amazing platform to learn, develop and thrive into the successful infrastructure engineer that he is today.

With a strong commitment to his studies and continuous professional development, Sam Longstaff, of Sedgefield-based cyber security firm Tekgem UK Limited, passed all his academic exams with distinctions and recently won Network Engineer of the Year with the national apprenticeship provider Intequal.

Sam's apprenticeship journey began in 2016 where, after a brief spell at university, he decided that a hands-on style of learning was much better suited to him. During his first year, and whilst studying a level 3 in infrastructure, Sam spent his time based at one of the region's biggest petrochemical companies on Teesside, supporting over 150 systems classified as critical to manufacturing operations.

Whilst studying for his level 4, Sam's involvement and support increased significantly. He designed and implemented new back-up systems, set new firewalls within virtual environments, and sought to improve Client business processes of deploying security updates to numerous vendor systems across the site. Having pitched the improvements to the Client's senior management team, these processes were implemented and adopted by other sites across Europe as the new best practice.

Sam completed his apprenticeship programme in January 2020 and was offered a permanent role with Tekgem as Infrastructure Engineer supporting multiple global clients. Sam, credited by his peers as "an absolute asset to the company", is continuing with further studies, mentors' new apprentices and supports clients with regulation and technical policies.individual with a very bright future.

★ COMPLETED WINNER

Tyler McKeown
APPRENTICE LABORATORY SCIENTIST, STERLING PHARMA SOLUTIONS

Tyler joined Sterling in 2015 as an Apprentice Lab Technician before moving to the Lab Scientist degree apprenticeship. During his time on the apprenticeship programme, he has developed from being the first apprentice in Sterling's quality control laboratory under the Government's new apprentice scheme, arriving straight from school, to representing the company overseas.

Tyler began learning the fundamentals of the pharmaceutical industry through performing basic lab functions including instrument calibrations, simple analysis including IR spectroscopy, water sampling, and maintenance of lab stocks via audits and ordering from approved suppliers. Tyler advanced to performing product release analysis, beginning with techniques such as TLC, but soon advanced to techniques such as HPLC/GC. This was above expectations for an apprentice in the early phases of the degree apprenticeship.

This early exposure to HPLC led to Tyler's involvement in testing a prototype for which he was invited to present his findings to international audiences in Switzerland and the US. It is testament to his reputation at Sterling that senior management were comfortable with him taking these trips alone and have since made him a brand ambassador. Tyler also promotes apprenticeships and science-based careers through his ambassador roles within the Science Industry Partnership and STEM programme.

Tyler is described by his peers as the living embodiment of the apprenticeship programme. He is a northern lad from a working-class background. The opportunity to study and work concurrently has given him a chance to display talents and achieve potential that may otherwise have gone unrealized.

★ SUPPLY CHAIN WINNER

Olivia Waugh
LABORATORY TECHNICIAN APPRENTICE, CPI

Olivia, who at just 16 years of age, is NEPIC's youngest ever award winner, has faced many challenges from the start of her apprenticeship just 6 months ago. Studying a Level 3 BTEC in Applied Science at Newcastle College, not only did she have to catch up on her studies following a late start date, but also travelled for 3 hours a day to get to and from college and later had to adapt to virtual learning.

Despite the difficult start, Olivia has not only caught up with the workload, but has achieved very high grades – showing real commitment, drive, and determination to her studies and future career. Learning to balance college and work pressures at such an early stage has been a steep learning curve having come straight from school, however, Olivia's very mature approach and effective communications has enabled her to thrive.

Olivia has already demonstrated that she is eager to make the most of her skills and always goes the extra mile. She has helped develop a new system for stock checking and ordering lists in the lab. She conducts weekly quality audits on plant and can confidently engage with all levels of staff within the business

Since Olivia joined CPI, she has become a valuable and reliable member of the micro team. All in the business are excited about her future and the amazing career she has ahead of her in the Biotechnology industry after such an impressive start.

YOUNG ACHIEVER AWARD

Sponsored by Altrad

ALTRAD

Representing the largest business sector in the North East of England, NEPIC has deep engagement with industry and training providers. However, NEPIC, along with award sponsor Altrad, seeks not only to promote the industry as a career choice for those leaving school and University but also to recognise the best and brightest young people already working within it.

Open to member company employees aged between 16 and 35, these awards recognise outstanding talent across the industry's five sectors:

Biotechnology; Commodity & Petrochemicals; Pharmaceuticals; Fine & Speciality Chemicals and Support & Supply Chain.

★ WINNER: BIOTECHNOLOGY

Philip Probert
HEAD OF TECHNICAL, CPI

Attaining a 1st class degree in Cell Biology from Durham University in 2010, Philip went onto complete a PhD at Newcastle University. Following this, he worked as a post-doctorate researcher before taking on a commercial role as an applications specialist. From his academic career, Philip has authored six papers, collaborated on a further ten and presented internationally, whilst also supervising students and establishing methods.

The environment, supervision and work gave him a vehicle to gain a diverse set of leadership, management, and scientific skills. Missing research and development, Philip joined CPI in 2017 as a scientist. On joining, Philip applied his skills to progressing the development work required on collaborative research projects. Later that year, Philip was promoted to Senior Upstream Scientist.

His work resulted in the award of £1 million of capital funding, which, coupled with recruitment activity, was used to develop new capabilities. Through leadership of the first cell-free project in the business, Philip established the business's capabilities with synthetic expression and scale up that enabled and accelerated the high-profile mRNA vaccine work that CPI undertook during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Philip was promoted to Head of Technical in May 2020, responsible for all technical delivery in the business unit and management responsibility of the function. In the first month, he completed a restructure of the team to improve role clarities and enable team expansion. With unprecedented workload, including Covid-19 therapeutic and vaccine projects, Philip grew the team by almost double, to over 40 scientists and apprentices, with improvements to planning, cross-team communication and training.

With the implemented restructure, leadership, and management of the group, he supported the business unit in achieving record revenue under the exceptionally challenging circumstances caused by Covid-19. In tandem, he continues to lead projects including leadership of mRNA development activity.

Philip is now studying towards an MBA and, whilst continuing with operational responsibilities, hopes to progress further whilst increasing the value that CPI generates for both customers, the sector, the region and ultimately, the wider society.

★ WINNER: COMMODITY & PETROCHEMICALS

Daniel Thompson
ASSISTANT MECHANICAL ENGINEER, HUNTSMAN POLYURETHANES UK

Daniel's career in industry started through a mechanical technician apprenticeship with TTE and Alpek in 2013 – an apprenticeship that he completed in ten months rather than the expected 24!

He went onto acquire a HNC in Mechanical Engineering – this achievement, coupled with an impressive attitude, led to him being put forward to study robotics and automation in America. Returning to the UK, he continued his education and studied a bachelor's degree – and earnt a much sought-after scholarship.

Working full time and studying via distance learning was very challenging and required discipline and consistency with studying and time management. Doing so, enabled Daniel to maintain high professional and academic standards and he was commended by his managers on multiple projects that included decommissioning, construction and commissioning, and maintenance lead on annual shutdowns. Daniel went on to join Billingham-based Fujifilm Diosynth Biotechnologies where he put his skills to use and supported engineering staff in becoming registered Engineering Technicians.

In 2018, he joined Huntsman Polyurethanes at Wilton as an assistant mechanical engineer. In addition to vital plant improvement and maintenance responsibilities, Daniel has developed a mechanical technician apprentice framework – an achievement he is most proud of.

Daniel completed his bachelor's degree with the Open University in 2019 after four years of distance learning. In 2020, he applied and obtained Incorporated Engineer membership with the IMechE. So impressed by his achievements, Daniel's scholarship was extended, and he is now studying for a master's degree - and hopes to apply for chartered status very soon.

★ WINNER: PHARMACEUTICALS

Amber Johnson
APPRENTICE LABORATORY TECHNICIAN, STERLING PHARMA SOLUTIONS

Amber is a laboratory technician with Sterling Pharma Solutions and is currently studying for her degree apprenticeship. Before joining Sterling in 2019, she worked as an educational lab technician across a variety of schools while completing a BTEC in applied science.

With no previous industrial experience, she excelled in her role at Sterling and quickly took on new responsibilities that included supporting the training of 3 new apprentices. Having mastered deadlines and instrumentation issues, coupled with technical skills and coping strategies, she now works on a solvent validation for a large and complicated project.

Amber is in her final year of a part time degree course in analytical chemistry at Newcastle College University Centre and is gathering a portfolio to achieve a Level 6 apprenticeship standard as a laboratory scientist.

In addition to her work and studies, Amber has taken opportunities to attend and deliver at careers events in primary and secondary schools to promote the industry and apprenticeships – including the women in science event held by Northumbrian Water and a careers day at high schools in the North East. Upon finishing her qualifications Amber's goal is to use the time she gets back to further support STEM activities – and already supports Women In Science and Engineering to further promote apprenticeships in STEM careers.

Within the working environment, she is looking forward to gaining a high level of competence so that she can use her skills, knowledge, and career achievements to support the training of new employees and apprentices. At only 23 years of age, Amber is one of our youngest winners of this award! A fantastic achievement.

★ WINNER: FINE & SPECIALITY

Kin On Ho
RESEARCH SCIENTIST - PROCESS TECHNOLOGIES, CPI

Kin qualified in 2015 with a bachelor's degree in chemistry before taking on an internship at CPI. Nanomanufacturing was his first project and, despite his initial reaction being "Nano-what?" before long, he was making glycan coated gold nanoparticles and collaborating with partners to develop and scale up this novel technology.

Process optimisation, conversion from batch to continuous flow, building a world-first open access pilot line from scratch with bespoke one-pass tangential flow filtration technology, in-line Process Analytics, a feedback & control system with LabView; you name it, Kin was doing it all!

Quick to learn and armed with his university studies and an interest in computer coding, he was soon offered a full-time role as a senior lab technician. Commercial product scaling of nanoparticles for drug delivery came next – whopping scaling in fact! 10 litres of this high-end stuff and a scale-up factor of x100 is significant and resulted in helping to secure future investment.

Caffeine supported his next project venture that spanned 3 time zones where he was appointed technical lead. This project started a brand-new relationship within UK and Canadian scientific research. Kin planned, discussed, developed, and reported on a commercially viable washing and filtration method for purifying and isolating graphene oxide from graphene oxide slurry.

Kin is all about promoting wellbeing and building strong bonds within teams to aid communication and to ensure everyone can perform their best within the working environment. He is the organiser, and coach, for the CPI badminton team and is an active STEM ambassador, seeking to inspire the next generation to pursue a career in industry.

★ WINNER: SUPPLY CHAIN

Molly Bell
TECHNICAL PLANT ENGINEER, SUEZ

Molly joined recycling and recovery firm Suez in 2017 as a graduate in the energy from waste division. Until 2019, Molly was part of a multidisciplinary team, working on projects key to the overall business such as site acquisitions, operational standardisation, and investigations into the application of innovative technologies – all whilst learning swiftly and progressing through the graduate scheme.

Molly's technical knowledge continued to develop, and she successfully completed the graduate scheme early. Gaining an unusual amount of responsibility in a short period was a massive personal achievement for her. Shortly after came the opportunity for progression again as she accepted the role of Technical Plant Engineer at a key SUEZ energy facility, becoming the only female site-based engineer in the UK - and the youngest! She quickly became a respected member of the site management team and was depended upon to deliver challenging work in a professional and timely manner.

Seeking to expand her external experience, Molly joined IChemE and was rapidly elected to the senior rank of Committee Vice Chair. Here she worked to implement project management rigour to the team's activity which successfully ensured the flawless execution of events. In 2020, Molly implemented changes to planning and execution of the Annual Dinner that improved event quality and made it one of the most popular dinners to date, with sales exceeding that of previous years - and a great achievement for the team!

Hugely passionate about the younger generation, she continually seeks to inspire at every available opportunity. Over time, Molly has developed from a shy graduate into a confident, diligent professional whose passion for the industry is demonstrated through innovative engineering and positive attitude.

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARDS

Sponsored by BOC

BOC
A Member of The Linde Group

The NEPIC - Linde BOC Environmental Awards recognise and reward the efforts of schools and organisations who work to protect the natural world from the impact of human and industrial activity. Together, we hope to raise local awareness of environmental issues and build community ties.

Primary School Environmental Award

The Primary School Environmental Award was established to encourage the environmental awareness and action of primary-aged pupils through the exploration of an environmentally themed project that could be delivered by pupils. The primary school with the winning idea is awarded £2,000 to take their project from concept to reality, creating many 'green' minds in the process.

Corporate Environmental Award

The Corporate Environmental Award celebrates the achievement of a member organisation who has successfully completed an impactful environmental improvement project within the past two years. The winning organisation will receive £2,000 to donate to a local school of their choice to fund a STEM-based environmental project and develop vital, lasting industry-academia links.

★ SCHOOL WINNER

East Herrington Primary Academy

Preserving nature and bringing learning to life is at the heart of this years' Primary School winners' application. East Herrington Primary have developed plans for an allotment area and wild garden for not only pupils to enjoy but to also help bring the local community together and enhance engagement.

The school will develop an outdoor classroom that the children plan to oversee, and project manage. Inspiration for this project came after the children rescued a homeless hedgehog from their local area, spurring them to get more involved in creating homes for local wildlife. With this enthusiastic mindset, the children were also keen to study the animal's behaviour and asked for an outdoor camera, enabling them to monitor the impacts.

Working towards the Eco-Schools Green Flag award, the school have developed a team of 'Eco Warriors' who have conducted an environmental review of the school and devised an action plan. Furthermore, the pupils have researched, designed, and created plans to map out their outdoor areas. They also priced up resources they would need to be able to develop and maintain these areas.

The whole of East Herrington Primary got involved to support this project and created a 'promise charter' that states the rules they will need to follow when using these areas. Staff have also developed risk assessments to ensure the areas are safe for all.

Giving back to the community is highly important to the school, and the children wanted to create outdoor resources that are accessible to families within the local community. The rise of COVID-19 has left many isolated and the improvement of the outdoor area will allow the community to come together. Furthermore, the school currently donate to the local food banks so part of the project will also allow the children to grow vegetables to donate and support this work.

★ CORPORATE WINNER

WSP

This year's corporate environmental award winner has set themselves apart by committing to go Carbon Neutral by 2025 – the first in their sector - as well as halving the carbon footprint of their design and advice by 2030.

Leading engineering consultancy firm, WSP, are focussing their efforts on business travel and office energy, which account for most of their greenhouse gas footprint. They have established numerous campaigns to involve employees in this commitment. WSP have introduced a 'Monday One Day' campaign to encourage staff to cease business travel for one day a week, and a 'Green Travel Fund' that recognises the greatest reduction in domestic flights.

Furthermore, they have produced a 'Green Home Guide' to help staff reduce environmental impact during home working lockdown – and across their sites, have improved energy efficiency by acquiring zero-carbon electricity and green gas. Committed to occupying and operating net zero premises by 2030, they have also signed up to the World Green Building Council 'Net Carbon Building Commitment'. Furthermore, monthly 'Future Ready' Innovation Lab meetings are also held to allow employees to consider responses and solutions to future low carbon trends.

Recognising the greatest impact they have is through the advice they give to clients, they are challenging their 48,000 staff to design for the future, not just today's codes. WSP are the first in their sector to make this changemaking pledge. Their Future Ready approach is a golden thread in their global strategy and is a key part of everything they do. Now operating across all their large markets globally, the environmental improvements are having an enduring impact.

Furthermore, they have introduced 'Carbon Conversations' – a live and interactive series of webinars that showcases carbon reduction tactics and best practice sharing. In preparation for COP26, WSP are also working to produce a manifesto for the UK net zero delivery that will enable more clients the opportunity to voice practical plans to deliver on net zero commitments across the chemical-processing sector.

WSP have clearly demonstrated how long-term thinking supports sustainable growth – whether that is through client work, their own operations or sharing what they have learnt nationally. To them, it is about doing the right thing, and this is inherent in their people, their projects, and their practice.

APPRENTICESHIP EMPLOYER AWARD

Sponsored by Sterling Pharma Solutions

The Apprenticeship Employer of the Year Award, kindly supported by Sterling Pharma Solutions, was established to celebrate and showcase member companies with a strong commitment to employing, nurturing and supporting apprentices.

Judges were looking for exemplar employers who showcased not only the measurable benefits that apprentices have provided but the value gained by developing their workforce through apprenticeship schemes, examples of best practice and the support put in place to help the development of apprentices within the workplace.

★ CORPORATE WINNER

Quorn Marlow Foods

The Apprentice Employer of the Year award celebrates and showcases outstanding commitment to employing, nurturing, and supporting apprenticeships.

This year's winner, Quorn Marlow Foods, has exceeded expectations when it comes to looking after their apprentices. They pride themselves on employing apprentices in every discipline within the sector – all of whom have successfully completed their training and are now employed full time within the business.

This success led Quorn Marlow Foods to make a strategic change and, as a result, they have established a full apprenticeship scheme. They also created an on-site classroom purposely designed to inspire and now deliver practical training supported by mentoring and pastoral care.

Furthermore, the business has appointed a dedicated training manager and developed an ambassador programme to support future talent recruitment supported by outreach activities. By actively promoting the scheme, Quorn hope that it will resonate with the youth of today and bring more talent to the business.

Sustainability, health, and wellbeing is at the heart of Quorn's ethos – and their apprenticeship scheme is an essential part of this framework.

SMALL BUSINESS OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Tekgem

TEKGEM

The Small Business of the Year award, sponsored by Tekgem, celebrates the sector's small-medium sized company that has quite simply cracked the process sector during 2020.

Our winning company will demonstrate business growth – in terms of both sales and jobs - along with product or service development and commitment to winning business in the process sector through programme participation and collaboration efforts. The winning firm will also showcase outstanding dedication to its workforce, local community and raising the profile of the sector within the region.

The winning organisation will receive £2,000 to donate to a local school of their choice to fund a STEM-related project and develop vital, lasting industry-academia links.

★ WINNER

Lynas Engineers

Passionate about their Teesside roots, and the regeneration and future of their hometown, Wilton-based civil engineering company, Lynas Engineers, are aiming high to put Teesside on map.

Committed to developing engineering talent through apprenticeships, this year's SME of the Year winner currently employ two apprentices and two Degree apprentices, with the aim creating their "own people." Managing Director, Rob Lynas, is keen for young people to "learn while they earn and curve out a future in civil engineering."

Over the last five years, Lynas Engineers has delivered over 200 projects while investing in the latest innovative technologies to put the firm at the forefront of its industry. They have worked with numerous NEPIC Members, along with Tees Valley Combined Authority and Northumbrian Water Group, to deliver major projects around the region.

Demonstrating sheer determination and professionalism, Lynas Engineers celebrated the completion of the A66 throughabout at the junction with Cargo Fleet Lane – a key interchange within the heart of Teesside. Not only did the team deliver a successful project and showed true tenacity, during the height of a global pandemic, but were conscious of how best to benefit the communities served by the new throughabout and kept reduction of congestion at the forefront of this project. It is hardly surprising that this development has since become the firm's biggest success to date.

Furthermore, Lynas Engineers have been highly proactive to champion Tees SMEs, facilitating collaborative working between them with the launch of a local supply chain initiative. Through this programme they aim to promote partnerships, and seek opportunities together, by offering a multi-disciplinary service to challenge the major companies.

Lynas Engineers is also committed to helping local charities – supporting sports teams, raising funds for local food banks and supporting by My Sister's Place and the High Tide Foundation. The firm's commitment to collaboration and sustainability of engineering in Teesside has been second to none, during one of the most challenging we have lived through.

Net Zero Teesside

Net Zero Teesside & Northern Endurance Partnership

Net Zero Teesside (NZT) and the Northern Endurance Partnership (NEP) aims to deliver a world first gas-fired power station with CCUS (carbon capture, utilisation and storage) and decarbonize a range of carbon-intensive businesses across Teesside, creating what would be the UK's first net-zero carbon industrial cluster.

Working in partnership with local industry and with committed, world class partners, the project plans to capture up to 10 million tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions, the equivalent to the annual energy use of over 3 million UK homes.

CCUS can play a significant role in local and national plans for regional development, and in the UK's industrial strategy for a low carbon Northern Powerhouse. NZT could support up to 5,500 direct jobs during construction alone, and support and safeguard between 35% and 70% of existing manufacturing jobs in the Tees Valley and help enable at least 7,000 potential jobs.

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COMMUNITIES & REPUTATION AWARD

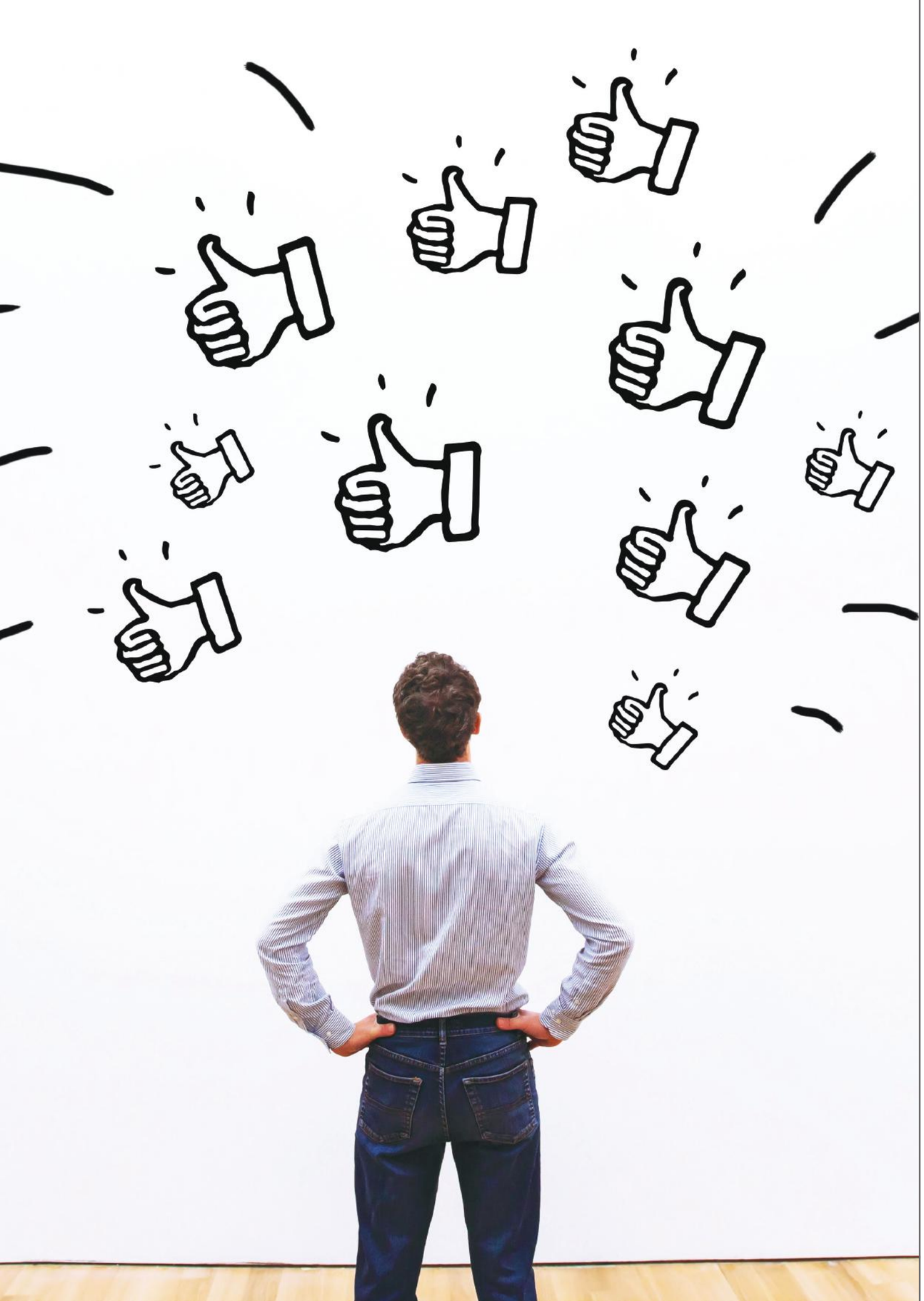
Sponsored by Net Zero Teesside

Net Zero Teesside

The Communities & Reputation Award, sponsored by Net Zero Teesside, will be given to the NEPIC member company that can clearly demonstrate an outstanding communities and reputation campaign across any aspect of social responsibility.

Responsible, caring companies are in a privileged position to help others and in turn be at the heart of the local community. In an ever-challenging business environment, this award will honour the NEPIC member that is making change for the better and is a realistic force for good.

The winning organisation will receive £2,000 to donate to a local school of their choice to fund a STEM-related project and further develop lasting industry-academia links.



★ WINNER

PD Ports

In a year like no other, this year's Communities and Reputation award winner, PD Ports, made it their 'business' to be at the heart of the community and made change for the better when it mattered the most.

Their response to supporting those in need throughout the pandemic is truly humbling and saw them donate more than £50,000 to causes across the UK.

When Covid-19 stuck, PD Port employees supported the decision to donate all proceeds from its internal charity initiative to support related causes.

As a result, they provided iPads to seriously ill Covid-19 patients so that they could remain in close contact with loved one whilst receiving treatment, and donated funds to tackle digital poverty and support Middlesbrough's most disadvantaged pupils.

Furthermore, they supported foodbanks and provided storage and logistical support throughout the summer holidays to redistribute thousands of the school meal parcels across the region.

And their work did not stop there. PD Ports also donated birthday gifts for 100 vulnerable children through children's charity, When You Wish Upon A Star – and they have supported many charities struggling during the pandemic including the Russ Devereux Headlight Project, Zoe's Place, Age UK and the British Heart Foundation.

PD Ports is not only at the heart of the nation's trade, but they are also at the heart of local communities and pledge to continue offering support and opportunities to society.

ENGINEERING FIRM OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by ITS

The Engineering Firm of the Year Award, sponsored by ITS, will be presented to the NEPIC member company that can clearly showcase business excellence from across the consultancy and engineering sector.

The winning firm will demonstrate innovative and timely solutions to engineering problems and exemplar 'best-in-class' project delivery performance. Evidence of staff retention, recruitment initiatives and education programmes, along with a demonstration of responsible care and community projects are also considered.

The winning organisation will receive £2,000 to donate to a local school of their choice to fund a STEM-related project and develop vital, lasting industry-academia links.

★ WINNER

Bilfinger UK Limited

This year's engineering firm of the year did not allow anything to hinder plans to grow during 2020. Industrial services provider, Bilfinger, not only secured multiple contract wins, but they also grew their teams to support growth and market diversification plans – and opened two new offices, including a regional office in Middlesbrough.

Understanding the impact of Covid-19 on their teams, Bilfinger introduced mental health initiatives during 2020 that included training, the 'start a conversation' campaign and confidential support and counselling for staff. Furthermore, they continued to invest in young talent through successful apprenticeship and graduate programmes – and prides themselves on their incredibly high employee retention rate. In many cases, they have seen staff starting from entry positions and working their way to senior posts.

Committed to managing the social, economic and environmental of their operations, Bilfinger have invested in various community projects – including the Sizwell C project that is set to create thousands of jobs across the UK and the North-West Hydrogen Alliance, the largest regional membership organisation dedicated to Hydrogen.

Furthermore, Bilfinger continued to innovate throughout the pandemic, supporting their customers at each hurdle and allowing them to operate safely and effectively. The firm remained open for business and created new tools, Bilfinger Remote Expert and Bilfinger Industrial 360, that allowed customers to continue their operations at full capacity, without disruption.

INNOVATION AWARD

Sponsored by CPI

cpi

The Innovation Award, sponsored by CPI, will honour the NEPIC member company or programme participant that has pursued game-changing ideas – across product, process and service – within the chemical-processing industries and associated supply chain.

This Award is judged on how innovative the idea is, how the organisation adopted it and its overall business impact. We are looking for a clear demonstration of significant improvement in sustainability, resource utilisation, along with market entrance and business growth.

The winning organisation will receive £2,000 to donate to a local school of their choice to fund a STEM-related project and develop vital, lasting industry-academia links.

★ WINNER

Recovery4Life

This year's Innovation Award winner, Gateshead-based Recovery4Life, responded quickly to the Covid-19 pandemic to support both operational continuity and the health and wellbeing of their clients.

With little known at the time about the virus, their clients faced unprecedented challenges. These challenges presented a complex set questions for the team – but respond to these questions they certainly did.

Recovery4Life quickly applied their risk-management principles and systems to the situation and used their clinical expertise to monitor the life cycle of the virus. They also identified emerging testing technologies and the management of transmissions in the workplace.

Furthermore, the team employed a specialist in infection diseases to provide clinical oversight that allowed them to develop testing programmes and a full risk management framework for the UK workplace – and developed a health tracking system, allowing Clients to identify when it was safe of people to return to work post infection.

Our winner's focus has always been on developing services that work and provide a lasting impact on the wider community. As a result, the firm have transitioned into a full occupational health service, started exporting and partnered with Teesside Airport for Covid-19 testing. During this period, turnover has tripled, and the workforce increased from 5 to 11 – with a further 10 contact staff.

MANUFACTURER OF THE YEAR

Sponsored by Doosan Babcock

The Manufacturer of the Year Award, sponsored by Doosan Babcock, seeks to recognise a regional manufacturer who can clearly demonstrate outstanding performance during 2019.

Commercial success and evidence of growth, delivery of innovation and continuous improvements, environmental credentials, enhanced supplier relationships and supply chain development are all taken into account.

The winning organisation will receive £2,000 to donate to a local school of their choice to fund a STEM related project and develop vital, lasting industry-academia links.

★ WINNER

FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies

FUJIFILM Diosynth Biotechnologies have quite simply showcased the very best in UK science whilst revolutionising manufacturing on Teesside.

In early 2020, their site secured a significant investment to expand manufacturing. A challenging two years of expansion lay ahead that shaped the expected outlook for the manufacturing teams.

But how things would change! By March, lockdown brought restrictions and, as the severity of the pandemic became apparent, so began a global mobilisation of vaccine manufacturing capacity. August saw the focus of the site became the introduction of a novel vaccine manufacturing process – and the team now faced an even more challenging expansion.

Latter projects benefit from 12 months of engineering concept design – and in stark contrast, much of the vaccine project needed to be in service within just seven months. The business pulled together to meet the challenges and the novel process was completed in November 2020. Only three months later, and 8 days earlier than estimated, manufacture began.

Many raw materials and consumables were introduced to the site, along with tens of manufacturing and validation documents prepared – and a staggering 180 people recruited. The team currently have four manufacturing batches in-flight – producing batches at 3x the usual rate. This will increase to 6x the usual in late 2021.

All of this has been completed in the world of social distancing and remote working – and our winners can confidently say that they have produced a world class effort to allow large scale manufacture within the north east process industry cluster.