

The Queen's Awards for Enterprise

Entrepreneurs offer shining examples in gloomy times

Even as the UK economy continues to struggle, many world-beating businesses are flourishing, writes *Brian Groom*



In pursuit of new markets: exports of Keltic Seafare's Scottish shellfish business have expanded rapidly

Five years into the most prolonged economic downturn of modern times, British business could do with cheering itself up. A glance through this year's winners of the Queen's Awards for Enterprise should help.

From a maker of mass spectrometers to a nail bar chain, from a maker of milking equipment to a supplier of food supplements to support fertility, the winners of the awards – first handed out in 1966 – are a showcase for the country's ability to create innovative products and services and sell them around the world.

The 2013 list, published to mark the Queen's birthday on April 21, contains 152 awards, mixing FTSE companies with private businesses and subsidiaries of foreign-owned groups.

The number is down slightly on the record of 209 awards in 2012, but the quality remains high. At the core of the list are dozens of often unsung smaller companies, for which the awards provide important recognition.

The drive that these companies have shown, particularly in boosting sales to emerging markets in Asia, Africa and South America, combined with their versatility and innovation, exemplifies the qualities required to help return the UK economy to healthy growth.

More such businesses are needed. The overall performance of the UK's tradeable sector has been, as the Bank of England puts it, "disappointing", particularly given the 20 per cent fall in the real value of sterling since the start of the financial crisis.

Weaker than expected exports accounted for almost all the shortfall in economic growth in 2012 compared with earlier forecasts from the Office for Budget Responsibility.

"The Queen's Awards for Enterprise are one of the most internationally recognised and sought-after awards that a UK business can achieve. They give companies prestige, an edge overseas and a well deserved boost," says Michael Fallon, the business minister.

He says the awards highlight "our strong entrepreneurial streak and the excellent businesses we have up and down the country who are growing, creating jobs, making a valuable contribution to the economy and helping us to compete in the global race. I applaud each and every one of the winners."

The awards demonstrate the UK's strength in sectors ranging from information technology and engineering to legal services, education, construction, architecture, horticulture, software, oil and gas, printing, medical devices and many more.

Winners include a publisher of online scientific information, the

These companies show the qualities required if the UK economy is to get back to healthy growth

world's only commercial specialist in breeding and propagating hybrid Dianthus (pinks), developers of games for mobile phones, makers of body armour and mailroom equipment and suppliers of whisky, beer and cheese.

Some are household names, such as Regatta, the outdoor clothing specialist, and Tyrrells Potato Crisps, the premium snack maker, both of which win international trade awards. Many other winners, such as Keltic Seafare, a supplier of Scottish shellfish, while perhaps less known to the British public, have seen their exports soar.

Other winning businesses range from enterprises with as few as two employees to FTSE companies such as De La Rue International, which wins an innovation award for novel banknotes to foil counterfeiters, and Renishaw, which wins one for developing a multi-sensor probing system for co-ordinating measuring machines.

Two companies have won awards in both the international trade and innovation categories: Niftylift, which

makes mobile aerial platforms for the building and maintenance sectors, and Reid Lifting, which makes lightweight, portable lifting equipment.

Spinko – Harrison Spinks – which makes bed springs, is a winner in both the innovation and sustainable development categories. Sun Mark, a marketing and distribution company in the fast-moving consumer goods sector, has become the first company to win an award five years in a row.

Awards are given for achievement in three categories: international trade, where there are 116 winners; innovation, with 27 awards; and sustainable development benefiting the environment, society and the economy, with nine. There are also eight enterprise promotion awards to individuals for efforts to encourage entrepreneurship.

Judges said the standard of entries this year was high, with 25 per cent of entrants winning an award. Fourteen

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An interview with Claire Dove of Blackburne House, and profiles of Keltic Seafare and Reid Lifting

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Queen's Awards for Enterprise 2013 - Q2

Inspirational breakthroughs

Innovation

From sustained research to simple ideas, new business models take many forms, writes Sarah Murray

When it comes to a key indicator of innovation – spending on research and development as a proportion of gross domestic product – the UK “still trails behind most of our main competitors”, according to the 2012 innovation report by the Department of Business Innovation & Skills (BIS). So as the 27 winners in the innovation category of the Queen's Awards for Enterprise are announced, the hope is that they can serve as an inspiration to their UK peers.

The UK performs relatively well on high-quality research, producing 14 per cent of the world's most frequently cited scientific papers, according to the BIS report. Yet, as winners indicate, British innovation goes well beyond science.

Science is certainly well represented this year. Equipment designed and manufactured by Wiltshire-based NanoSight can measure nanoparticles that have dimensions of less than one-

millionth of a metre. The company has been recognised for its contribution to advances in manufacturing processes, as well as to medical and pharmaceutical research.

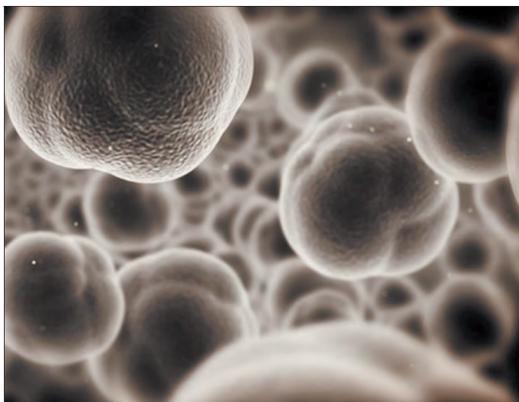
Originating from a scientific research programme, the Pregnacare range of micronutrient food supplements developed by London-based Vitabiotics helps “support women who are trying to conceive”. It might also help reduce unhealthy births and support foetal development, as well as aiding postnatal breastfeeding and fostering healthy brain and eye development in babies.

But while scientific research can lead to breakthroughs in healthcare, sometimes all it takes is a good idea – as was the case with the product developed by Hydrate for Health, a two-person company based in Bristol.

It was when Mark Moran, now chief executive, was recovering from a spinal operation and unable to get himself a drink that he conceived of the idea of the “hydrant”. The drinking aid is similar to a sports drinking bottle but has a clip that allows it to be attached to beds or wheelchairs.

Along with science-based and healthcare innovations, the awards reflect the UK's strength in engineering. This year, several of the innovations support the energy sector – both renewable sources and fossil fuels.

In the field of renewables, the new class of seabed ploughs and trenching



Growth business: NanoSight technology can measure nanoparticles that have dimensions of less than one-millionth of a metre

equipment developed by Soil Machine Dynamics supports the installation of offshore wind power marine infrastructure.

However, not all innovations are about equipment or technology. This year's awards include a company that has been recognised for a methodology – one designed to improve the lives of young people.

Livity, a London-based marketing agency, invites young people from all backgrounds to its premises, a former piano factory, to help create marketing campaigns aimed at young people. While there, they receive mentoring, training and support – improving their employment prospects.

Sam Conniff, chairman and co-founder, stresses that while Livity has a social mission, profitability matters just as much as the creative process. “We fly the flag for profit,” he says, “because if a business is not financially sustainable, it's not going to be here to make a difference.”

The UK performs well on high-quality research, producing 14 per cent of the world's most frequently cited scientific papers

Wise heads help raw talent

Enterprise promotion

Winners show the value of having a good mentor, finds Andrew Bounds

While the UK economy has shrunk since the financial crash of 2008, the number of businesses has grown. There were an estimated 4.8m private sector businesses in the UK at the start of 2012, the highest estimate since data were first collected in 2000.

At least 200,000 businesses were started in 2011, a year-on-year rise of 4.4 per cent – proof that tough financial and economic conditions have not stymied enterprise.

The eight individual recipients of the enterprise promotion award represent an array of academics, business advisers and social entrepreneurs.

Mike Herd is executive director of the Sussex Innovation Centre, a business incubation company attached to the University of Sussex. SInC is a self-sustaining business that supports university spin-out companies and other local organisations.

Liz Towns-Andrews is director of research and enterprise at the University of Huddersfield, which was voted Entrepreneurial University of the Year 2012 in the Times Higher Education Awards.

Ian Smith is vice-principal at Surbiton High School in London and has taught business and enterprise for 20 years, while also helping with Young Enterprise, an education charity through which schoolchildren set up businesses and other organisations.

Richard Gallafent is a London patent attorney who provides voluntary advice on intellectual property and licensing matters for inventors.

The youngest winner this year is Rajeeb Dey, just 27. He founded Internships, which places young people in start-up or entrepreneurial companies. The organisation evolved from Mr Dey's work as president of Oxford Entrepreneurs, the University of Oxford's entrepreneurs' society.

“After 2008 there was a lot of graduate unemployment and it was the perfect time to set up,” says Mr Dey. “The best way to learn about business is to work in a start-up.”

Mr Dey is also a co-founder of StartUp Britain,

a national campaign to promote entrepreneurship, backed by David Cameron, the prime minister. Along with entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson, it has persuaded the government to provide £117.5m for start-up loans for the under-30s, with more than 2,000 loans handed out so far.

Lady Cunningham is an enterprise development coach with Ways Into Successful Enterprise in Cumbria, which supports and mentors disadvantaged individuals and groups to set up businesses, enter employment or become self-employed.

John Vernon is a voluntary adviser with Oxfordshire Business Enterprises, mentoring start-ups and small and medium-sized businesses.

Finally, Claire Dove picks up the Lifetime Achievement Award for Enterprise Promotion. She is chief executive of Blackburne House in Liverpool, which trains and supports women in business.

It is important to strike a balance between passion and profitability, Ms Dove says. “Social enterprises want to make money. It's what we do with the money that is the difference.”

Read more about Claire Dove: ft.com/queens-awards

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Dr. Rami Ranger MBE, FRSA is a successful businessman who has been honoured seven times by Her Majesty the Queen, six times for Business and once personally for community services.

He was made a Member of British Empire in 2005. Rami is married to Renu and has three daughters. Rami set up his first business in 1987 with a mere 2 pounds capital.

His second company, Sun Mark Ltd has received an unprecedented fifth consecutive Queen's Award for Enterprise in International Trade for 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013,

in the process, making business history. To date, no other company has received such an accolade. He is also a Fellow of the Prince's Trust and works tirelessly to enable The Prince's Trust to reach even more youths to pass on his experience and expertise in inspiring the next generation of entrepreneurs.

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Queen's Awards for Enterprise 2013 - Q3

Industry starts to scale the export mountain

International trade Companies are finding profitable niches overseas, says *Andrew Bounds*

When Metalube was founded in 1989 all its sales were to UK customers. Last year the Manchester-based business, which makes lubricants for the wire and cable industry, sent 96 per cent overseas. It is a familiar story for the UK's manufacturers as factories have moved abroad.

But Metalube, a £7m turnover business with 31 staff, has gone further than most in pursuit of new markets. It opened a sales office in China in 2005, and now has a presence in India and Brazil. Overseas sales have grown 50 per cent in three years, earning the company its first Queen's Award.

But not enough British companies have followed its lead. Brazil, Russia, India and China accounted for just 7 per cent of total UK exports in 2011, against 54 per cent for the EU, according to the Confederation of British Industry, the business lobby group.

The value of exports to the Brics countries rose 42 per cent between

2008 and 2011, compared with an increase of 9 per cent for sales to the US and 10 per cent to the EU. Yet even if growth continues to pick up as it has done in recent years, exports to the fast-growing Brics economies will not account for the majority of the UK's total until around 2047.

Katja Hall, chief policy director of the CBI, says "there is a mountain to climb" if the government is to meet its stated aim of doubling exports to £1tn a year by 2020.

Douglas Hunt, Metalube's commercial director, says his previous experience working for a multinational has given him useful contacts to set up overseas offices. "All the people we have taken on are those I knew and trusted," he says.

Mr Hunt says British businesses have to compete with local outfits that happily grease palms to win contracts. "Corruption is there - it is the elephant in the room. You have to protect yourself, your intellectual property and your integrity, because

it is very easy to wreck your reputation," he says.

However, the risk is worth the reward, he says. "There are unbelievable opportunities in these markets that could transform our business."

Deloitte, the professional services firm, has identified export growth as key for the UK Futures 1000, the country's fastest-growing businesses.

David Sproul, Deloitte chief executive, says four things mark out these companies, including "the knowledge and confidence to export". In common with Metalube, they tend to be world leaders in a particular niche, be privately held with a long-term vision and are able to change quickly and adapt their culture to foreign markets.

Andrew Graham, chief executive of family-owned Graham & Brown, a wallpaper maker based in Blackburn, says there is a tremendous appetite for British crafts among the emerging global middle class.

His company has been selling to North Africa and further afield,

helped by government-backed credit insurance. UK Export Finance has extended insurance coverage beyond capital goods and project work.

Tyrrells Potato Crisps, the snack maker based in Herefordshire, is another winner that has benefited from the government's export push. It sells up its British roots and has been selling bags of crisps in Russia for £5 - more than double the UK price - after David Milburn, managing director, joined David Cameron, the UK prime minister, on a trip to the country.

Peter Birtles, a director of Sheffield Forgemasters International, one of the last British-owned steelmakers, says its heritage and knowhow have allowed it to export huge components.

The company originally made armour plating for battleships but now has few domestic customers. "British industry has no need for Sheffield Forgemasters - 70 per cent of our production is exported," Mr Birtles says. "But we have found a model that works - and are having fun."

Lubricating the sale: Metalube opened a sales office in China in 2005, and now has a presence in India and Brazil



Entrepreneurs offer shining examples

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of the winning companies have 10 employees or fewer, while 133 have fewer than 250 employees.

Among the smallest companies, Metal Events and Hydrate for Health each have two employees. The former, as its name suggests, organises events for the global metals industry, for which it wins an international trade award. The latter wins an innovation award for developing a hands-free drinking system to reduce dehydration in hospital patients and residents of care homes.

The oldest companies among the winners include Royal Society of Chemistry Publishing, a not-for-profit scientific publisher, learned society and professional body for chemical scientists. Winn & Coales International, which makes anti-corrosion tapes, coatings, sealants and waterproofing products, was established in 1883. Both win international trade awards.

Elsewhere in the international trade category, foreign-owned winners include Inca Digital Printers, a Japanese manufacturer of industrial digital flatbed ink-jet printers; Swiss-owned Mettler-Toledo Safe-line X-ray, which sells X-ray systems to the food and pharmaceutical industries; and Sweden's Euroforest, which harvests and markets British timber.

Manufacturing, which is struggling to recover from recession, provides a wide range of winners, including Steelite International, a Stoke-based maker of ceramic tableware for the

hospitality industry; Pearson Engineering, a Newcastle upon Tyne-based maker of military engineering products such as landmine rollers, mine ploughs and bulldozers; and Totalpost Services, which makes mail-room equipment.

Nails Inc, a London-based company established in 1999, is among the more colourful winners: it set out to establish a chain of branded nail bar concessions in leading department stores with high footfall, and has created a worldwide business with the help of a trading partner, Sephora.

Fever-Tree, established in 2004 "to create the perfect gin and tonic", now markets a portfolio of premium, natural mixer drinks sold to 35 overseas markets. The Cambridge Satchel Company, which started trading in December 2008 from a kitchen table, manufactures and sells traditional leather satchels directly to customers and top stores.

In the innovation category, ADF Milking, based in West Sussex, wins an award for developing a "milking cluster-based automatic dipping and flushing system", which has reduced the risk of disease associated with milking cows.

Winners of the Queen's Awards are visited by a royal representative and presented with a crystal bowl to mark their achievement. They also attend a reception at Buckingham Palace and can use the Queen's Award emblem in advertising, marketing and on packaging for a period of five years as a symbol of their quality and success.

Green approaches add social value to the mix

Sustainable development

Environmental and social benefits often go hand in hand, writes *Sarah Murray*

In terms of numbers, the winners in the sustainable development category represent a weak showing in this year's Queen's Awards for Enterprise. Just nine names appear in the list, but individually they are rich in ideas.

A name change in 2001 for the category, from awards for environmental

achievement, reflected the need to recognise organisations that are not only addressing their environmental footprint but also their social impact. This year, several winners have been rewarded for this joint approach.

Based in Newcastle upon Tyne, the Shared Interest Society, a lender to Fair-trade buyer and producer organisations, uses loans to shape the way they do business by imposing requirements on their management practices.

However, environmental impact is a consideration too. Shared Interest uses loans to foster environmen-

tally sustainable practices, such as the use of locally sourced materials and organic production methods.

Social impact is the main focus for The Workspace Group, a Northern Ireland-based social enterprise that fosters community regeneration by encouraging enterprise and self-employment.

Yet, as with Shared Interest, the group's activities - which include undertaking energy efficiency and local energy generation projects - show the line between social and environmental impact is not always clear cut.

"There is a significant opportunity to develop economic activity from envi-

ronmental sustainability," explains Brian Murray, chief executive of the Workspace Group. "We have developed a model for sustainable energy projects that can be applied to any area, with the outcome being local job creation, energy cost reduction, carbon dioxide savings, investment opportunities and various other social impacts."

Even when it comes to wildlife conservation, the relationship with humans remains an important one. Scottish Seabird Centre, which wins its third sustainable development Queen's Award since 2004, is a conservation charity.

Yet in promoting responsible tourism, it acknowledges that bringing society and nature closer together can protect wildlife.

In doing so, the centre is part of a broader global trend. Development groups and environmental organisations - which once had very different missions - have moved closer together as they have seen that protecting the environment and fostering economic development are not conflicting aims.

Wessex Water Services, for example, wins in the sustainable development category in part because it is the first water company

to establish catchment management agreements with farmers outside its own landholdings.

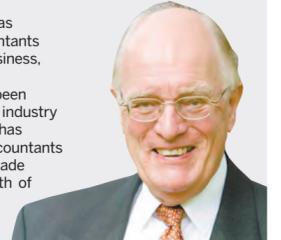
The company works with farmers to help them manage their use of nitrates and pesticides to reduce water pollution.

Several award winners are addressing resource consumption. Seasalt, a clothing company based in Penzance, is working to reduce the environmental impact of its clothing and accessories. Seasalt is the first UK fashion company to meet Soil Association standards on organic cotton, and has adopted measures such as waste reduction.

Denis Wick

Founder, Denis Wick Products

"The worst thing that has happened is that accountants have taken over the business, and the entrepreneurial inventiveness that has been the backbone of British industry for the past 200 years has been superseded by accountants having their products made in the Far East at a tenth of the price so they can make more money."





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THE QUEEN'S AWARDS FOR ENTERPRISE: INTERNATIONAL TRADE 2013

Queen's Awards for Enterprise 2013 - Q4

Niftylift forges academic links to raise itself above the crowd

Engineering The work platform maker is big on research and exports but finding young British talent is tough, writes *Liz Bolshaw*

When you see a construction crew operating at enormous heights in a little cage on a steep gradient, the chances are Niftylift is to thank. Now one of Europe's largest manufacturers of mobile elevating work platforms – cherry pickers to you and me – Niftylift is an object lesson in British engineering and entrepreneurship, and is the winner of two Queen's Awards – one for international trade and one for innovation.

The company has focused on producing machines for the rental market – 90 per cent of its business – and this means ensuring they are what John Keely, Niftylift managing director, calls "idiot-proof".

Throughout the downturn the company raised investment in research and development. "That's why we got a leap ahead – a lot of competitors spent three years not developing anything," says Mr Keely, also acknowledging the advantages of being a private company with low bank debt.

Other much larger companies have benefited from Niftylift's technological knowhow. Steel manufacturer and construction firm Severfield-Rowen

spent "about two years and £6m trying to develop a low-weight machine that would allow steel buildings to go up much faster", says Mr Keely. "We came along and adapted something we already had in about six weeks. Severfield-Rowen won the Shard because of that product."

Niftylift is a leader in producing fuel-efficient and low-emission machines – something it was doing "long before it became fashionable", says Mr Keely.

Today, 75 per cent of Niftylift's sales are exports, supported by a dealer network covering more than 40 countries. "We have been exporting for 25 years, but at the beginning we focused on local markets – France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Sweden," he says.

Niftylift makes marketing videos available in dozens of languages at trade shows – Mr Keely himself speaks French and German. For customers whose language is not provided for, Niftylift has a solution: five or six years ago it introduced a small corporate brochure that was devoid of words, relying entirely on pictures and numbers to showcase its product range. "Others have copied us, but we were the first," says Mr Keely.



"We never add too many countries too quickly. So say we start off in France, we make sure France is up and running well before we add Spain," he says of the company's measured expansion strategy that aims to add two new territories a year. "Luckily, we moved into selling into America in about 1994. It is such a big market, which has helped us."

In the US, Niftylift faces competitors with \$4bn in sales, but this does not faze Mr Keely. "It is almost better to have big competitors, because they are not very agile," he says.

But there is one country above all that Niftylift is proud to call a major market. "In the early days I wouldn't have tried to sell into Germany – I didn't think our quality was good enough," he says. "They won't accept anything but the best. That our prod-

'We also work with schools but it is not easy encouraging young people to get into engineering'

uct is now accepted in Germany is a badge of honour."

Mr Keely is developing new markets in South America but is also bullish about the outlook at home. "Our industry is quite a bellwether. We feel it six months before anyone else – in 2015 London is going to go bonkers in construction," he says.

Roger Bowden founded the company five years after graduating in engineering from Brunel University, and Niftylift maintains a strong relationship with his alma mater and other academic institutions. In spite of active outreach and the kind of home-grown success story that makes headlines, attracting talent is a challenge.

"We have links with a number of universities – we do postgraduate schemes. We also work with schools, but it is not easy encouraging young people to get into engineering," says Mr Keely.

"The engineering graduates are more often than not overseas students. Engineers are valued more in other countries. We run apprenticeship schemes for school leavers, but in spite of all the advertising we do, it is almost impossible to find people. Nobody wants to do it – they are not interested in engineering."

Reaching new heights: Niftylift aims to expand into two extra countries a year

Spinko exploits fertile new fields

Manufacturing
Buying a farm has been a boost for the bed spring maker, writes *Paul Solman*

When a company has become a market leader designing and manufacturing innovative bed springs, purchasing a farm might not seem the most obvious strategic move.

But in the case of Spinko – which trades as Harrison Spinks – the farm it acquired in 2009 has become an integral part of its operations and has led to the Leeds-based business winning two Queen's Awards – one for innovation and the other for sustainable development.

"When we first looked at the farm, we weren't thinking in terms of our carbon footprint," says Richard Naylor, Harrison Spinks' business development manager.

"We looked at ourselves and asked what we did. The answer we came up with was that we are makers of comfort."

"Keeping our own sheep was our way of becoming innovative in the use of natural fibres."

As well as rearing Texel, Leicester and Swaledale sheep to provide wool for mattress upholstery, the 300-acre farm enables Harrison Spinks to grow natural, non-woven materials, such as hemp and flax.

This approach means the family-owned company can attack the market vertically, says Mr Naylor. "If you look at other manufacturers, they buy the components and assemble them," he says.

"We take the view that innovation means making components ourselves – not only the springs but the natural fibres."

Harrison Spinks' farm has brought other benefits. The site, which includes a grade II-listed building, is just 20 miles from the company's factory in Leeds, reducing the company's carbon emissions, and is home to diverse wildlife, such as several protected species of birds.

The business, which employs 300 people and can trace its origins back to 1840, has since bought a 50-acre woodland in North Yorkshire, which it hopes will provide timber for bed frames and fuel for the factory.

Nevertheless, Harrison Spinks' main innovation and core business remains its low-height pocket spring, which comprises a small spring inserted into a standard pocket spring.

The company's patented manufacturing process allows the springs to be made in high-density sheets.

Its products are marketed under brand names such as Spinks Springs, Spink & Edgar and Somnus, and the company is the largest bed supplier to the John Lewis retail chain.

However, Harrison Spinks' springs are also suitable for many applications in addition to the mattress market, such as upholstery, office, automotive and aviation seating.

Mr Naylor says Harrison Spinks recently signed a deal with Johnson Controls, one of the leading US car parts makers, which will see the Yorkshire company's pocket spring technology replace polyurethane foam in the seats of some US-made cars over the next few years.

"Our springs are lighter than foam and so they make the cars more fuel-efficient," says Mr Naylor.

"They also take up less room, which means the seats can be thinner, allowing more leg room."

Queen's Awards for Enterprise Methodology

International trade: Winners have demonstrated their business has achieved substantial growth in overseas earnings and in commercial success (for their business size and sector) either through outstanding achievement over three years or continuous achievement over six years.

Innovation: Winners have demonstrated their business

has substantially improved in areas of performance and commercial success by either: outstanding innovation, continued over at least two years; or continuous innovation and development over at least five years. Innovation achievements are assessed for invention, design or production; performance of services and products; marketing and distribution; or

after-sales support of goods or services.

Sustainable development: Winners demonstrate commercially successful products, services and approaches to management that have major benefits for the environment, society and the wider economy either by outstanding advance over at least two years; or continuous achievement over five years.

Sustainable development achievements are assessed for invention, design, production, performance, marketing, distribution, after sales support of goods or services; or management of resources or people, and relationships with other organisations (or their representatives). Businesses can enter more than one award category.

Enterprise promotion This award recognises people who have played an outstanding role in promoting the growth of business enterprise and/or entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in others, for example by giving up their time to help potential entrepreneurs in education or in starting a business. There are eight recipients this year. Source: BIS

See online >>

Read in-depth coverage, more profiles and the complete list of winners for all categories at www.ft.com/queens-awards

Steve Fitz-Gerald Marshall Aerospace and Defence Group CEO

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