

# **Edinburgh company a finalist in MSDUK Innovation Challenge**

**Edinburgh based Waterwhelm has been shortlisted in the MSDUK Innovation Challenge. The company has developed a self-powered technology for producing freshwater from wastewater.**

At the same time it also produces biofuel on large scale or renewable energy on small scale applications. There is also a side product which can be used as a fertiliser.

Alireza Abbassi Monjezi, Founder of Waterwhelm, spoke about the finalist position saying, "The motivation behind founding Waterwhelm is that about a third of the world's population lack access to safe, readily available water at home. The existing challenges in the water industry are mainly around small and remote communities. This is due to the energy intensity of the processes involved in water and wastewater treatment and the lack of infrastructure in many countries to supply energy for these processes.



Alireza Abbassi Monjezi

“Waterwhelm has taken a transformative approach to present a self-powered solution by using the chemical energy available in sewage. Generally speaking, the human digestive system is about 25% efficient at converting the chemical energy present in food into output, the remaining energy content ends up in the sewage. We tap into this hugely undermined bio-resource to not only produce clean water but also generate renewable energy specifically on small-scale applications.

“It feels really amazing to have made it through to the finals given that the quality of the presentations at the semi-final event was absolutely brilliant. We feel privileged to be part

of such an accomplished group of companies and talented individuals. This is an important endorsement for Waterwhelm and it demonstrates that our efforts are not going unnoticed.

“Winning the competition will give us much needed publicity and financial support. Personally, coming from an academic background, winning one of the business school scholarships will be extremely invaluable as it allows me to enhance my business development skills in taking Waterwhelm forward and reinventing water supply.”

Headline sponsor and Challenge judge James Johnson, Corporate Indirect Purchasing Sourcing Specialist at Cummins, commented on this year’s finalist line up saying, “The finalists innovations cover an enormous spectrum of sectors ranging from space technology to portable dishwashers, from pressure-sensing technology to bio-renewable tech that converts agricultural waste into electricity, and from digital marketing innovations through to cutting edge developments in machine-translation for the medical sector.

“Our finalists are based across the UK including Manchester, Leicester, London, Edinburgh, Strathclyde and Hatfield and 31% are female founders. This year’s finalists also come from a wide spread of ethnic backgrounds including Pakistani, Indian, Caribbean, African, Chinese and Asian.”

MSDUK Founder and CEO, Mayank Shah, added, “MSDUK’s aim is to bring together innovative and high growth Ethnic Minority-owned businesses with global corporations who are committed towards creating an inclusive and diverse supply chain and the Innovation Challenge is just one way we do this.

“The theme for the third year of our Innovation Challenge is ‘Better Ideas for a Better World’ and entrants had the opportunity of entering any of four categories which were Industry 4.0, Healthcare & Wellbeing, Social Innovation, and Sustainable Futures.

“We ended up with 13 finalists rather than our usual 12 which is testament to the sheer diversity of applications in this year’s Innovation Challenge, as well as to the quality of the pitches and the incredible ideas that sit behind those pitches. It was a very tough day for our judges and again demonstrates the wealth of innovative ideas we have here in the UK within the Ethnic Minority-owned business community.”

The final of the Innovation Challenge 2019 will take place at the MSDUK 2019 Conference & Awards which is being held in London. The Innovation Challenge final takes place on Tuesday 17 September 2019 when the 13 entrepreneurs will present their innovative products and ideas to potential investors, buyers and industry experts. After the live pitch three winners will be chosen by a panel of judges who will score finalists on criteria including relevance, quality of innovation and marketing strategy. Challenge prizes include;

- £5,000 cash prize for the Innovation Challenge winner plus introductions to MSDUK’s investor network and workshops
- £40,000 worth of business school scholarships at Ivy League Tuck School of Business for the top four finalists
- £100,000 worth of corporate mentoring delivered via a 12 – 18 month corporate mentoring programme with Accenture and Digital Catapult
- 2-year MSDUK Premium Membership with unlimited access to MSDUK Hub Programmes and events for all 13 finalists

Sponsors for the MSDUK Innovation Challenge 2019 include Headline Sponsor, Cummins and Sponsors Johnson & Johnson, Accenture, EY and Digital Catapult.