

News release

Loughborough University success at Leicestershire Innovation Awards

Loughborough University's research and innovation activities enjoyed success at the Leicestershire Innovation Awards – receiving three awards.

[Link to the original news release.](#)

The Awards were hosted by broadcaster and actor Martin Ballard on Wednesday 20 March at the University's [SportPark Pavilion 4](#) – one of just a handful of buildings in the UK to have attained Passivhaus Sustainability status.

The University has been well represented in the region's flagship celebration of innovation since its launch in 2019. This year's Awards received a record number of nominations with almost 100 submitted.

Two of the University's winners are Loughborough graduate start-ups – both launched from [LUinc.](#), the University's incubator on [LUSEP](#), its Science and Enterprise Park:

Moti Me

Category: Innovation in Sport, Well-being and Accessibility

[Moti Me](#) is a physiotherapy-focused product to help children with disabilities. Since founding the company in 2021, Katie Michaels (BA Industrial Design and Technology, 2020) has been testing Moti Me prototypes with special needs schools and physiotherapy centres across the country, including Ashmount Primary School and STEPS Conductive Education Centre.

The Bug Factory

Category: Innovation in Food and Drink

Founded by Thomas Constant (Industrial Design and Technology, 2018), [The Bug Factory](#) is revolutionising the food system through the creation of scalable, accessible and sustainable insect protein. Its innovative modular, circular-economy insect-rearing facilities empower feed enterprises to save money, reduce their environmental impact and achieve carbon-negative goals. Six months ago, Thomas relocated to Leicestershire to build a large-scale R&D insect farm.

The third Award recognises the University's pioneering work in the field of green energy:

Unique lead-acid battery-electrolyser

Category: Innovation in STEM Industries

A team lead by [Professor Dani Strickland](#) has developed the world's first lead-acid [battery-electrolyser](#) – a low-cost system, making the use of



Leicestershire Innovation Awards 2024 for
LoCEL-H2's lead battery-electrolyser.

excess renewable energy to produce hydrogen gas viable. The innovation is being accelerated for use in renewable energy-powered microgrids that support the world's poorest communities that have no access to electricity or clean cooking – issues which respectively affect 13% of the global population and 2.4 billion people.

The University's commended finalists were:

- A team led by [Mark Lewis](#) (Professor of Musculoskeletal Biology) who have developed laboratory grown ([bioengineered](#)) tissues that mimic the human musculoskeletal system – paving the way for personalised rehabilitation. This pioneering medical technology could support the development of new therapies. These models are more ethical than the animal trials currently used and provide a method for replacing injured or diseased tissues with healthy tissue made from your own cells.
- A partnership between [Loughborough University and Rolls-Royce](#) with easyJet and the German Aerospace Center (DLR) which has made a significant breakthrough towards achieving net zero aviation. In September 2023, they announced a global industry first. They have developed a critical engine technology, demonstrating that hydrogen could be used as an aviation fuel – replacing fossil fuels.
- [Aftrak](#) – a groundbreaking initiative led by [Dr Jonathan Wilson](#) (Lecturer in Sustainable Energy Systems) that combines solar microgrids and tailored tractors to empower smallholder farmers across Africa. It aims to significantly increase crop yields and smallholder incomes while providing access to clean, green electricity in rural communities. The project is among the five ground-breaking global finalists for the \$1 million Milken-Motsepe Prize in Green Energy.
- Graduate start-up [Nestwork](#) – a careers social network designed by students, for students. Created by a diverse team led by current students Flynn Duggan and Samuel Ola, and recent graduates Pobor Eruesegbefe and Som E-Agwuegbo, its innovative web platform demystifies the job discovery and acquisition process, helping students take control of their job prospects and find their first steps into their dream careers.

Professor Dan Parsons – the University's Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation – said: "It's fantastic that the University's extensive innovation and research portfolio has once again been so well recognised by the Leicestershire Innovation Awards. It is testament to the impressive variety of our activities and their level of excellence.

"Many congratulations to all the commended finalists and winners who have shown real ingenuity and determination in addressing some of today's most pressing challenges."

The Awards – sponsored by De Montfort University, the University of Leicester and Loughborough University – are part of the annual [Leicestershire Innovation Festival](#).

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The members of the partnership are CEA, Consortium for Battery Innovation, HOPPECKE, Hollingsworth & Vose, Loughborough University, LUMS, RHYDE, Sunkofa, UNINA, and University of Gabes.