



Apr 26, 2016 10:18 BST

## Royal seal of approval for graduate entrepreneur

Dan Robson, founder of Green Digit Gardening, collected The Duke of York Young Entrepreneur Award from The Duke himself at a special awards ceremony, organised and hosted by the University of Huddersfield.

The awards aim to highlight the roles that young entrepreneurs play in creating businesses that demonstrate commercial or social impact, as well as having potential for sustainability and growth.

Dan established his gardening products company while studying Design for

Industry at Northumbria in 2014. After undertaking a work placement in a plastics packaging family, he realised that he could help to reduce waste by making packaging part of the product.

He developed SeedCell – a seed germination system made with recycled packaging. The packaging is used to directly push seeds into the soil. It is fully biodegradable and retains water, which ensures that the germinating seed cannot be over-watered.

The University's Student and Graduate Enterprise Scheme provided Dan with guidance and support to develop his business idea. He has received business start-up advice, office space within the Northern Design Centre and mentoring which has provided access to investment capital to fund the business.

Dan's product is now sold in Homebase and B&Q with plans to distribute in Europe, the USA and the Middle East. The Duke of York even took some samples at the event to pass on to the Prince of Wales!

Speaking after receiving his award, Dan said: "It was a fantastic day and a real honour to have been picked out from a line-up of such talent. There were so many great businesses there so we are really proud to have been included.

"We are really excited about how much has happened over the last six months. We have had a fantastic response to the product and are working on a new product that will allow you to grow herbs indoors all year round. The Duke of York himself seemed very taken with the product and went home with three SeedCells in his bag, adding he would pass them on to the Prince of Wales. Maybe one day we can have SeedCell by Royal appointment!"

He added: "None of this would have happened without Northumbria University's support. Through the University's hatchery scheme we were provided with an office in the Northern Design Centre. This allowed us to set up the operation and run the business, surrounded by other start-ups, in the heart of the North East design hub. This environment was instrumental in encouraging the growth of the business and we are still engaging with several businesses within the Centre for help with our marketing and media."

Northumbria University is renowned for the support it offers students and

graduates to start-up their own businesses. It is the number one university in the UK for graduate start-ups based on estimated turnover, having supported the development of more than 100 graduate companies since 2009. Today, these companies employ almost 950 staff and have a combined turnover of £62.2 million. Most of these businesses are based in the North East but are trading nationally and internationally.

Lucy Winskell OBE, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Business and Engagement, said: “Dan is a fantastic example of a student who has found inspiration during his studies to create a transformative product which is already attracting the interests of national retailers.

“We are delighted that he has been recognised in these prestigious awards for creating a business with impact and growth potential.”

For more information on the business start-up advice and support the University provides to its students and graduates, visit [www.northumbria.ac.uk/sgenterprise](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/sgenterprise)

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If you have a media enquiry please contact our Media and Communications team at [media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk) or call [0191 227 4571](tel:01912274571).

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