



## WELSH INNOVATION AWARDS

### Welsh Innovation Awards help springboard talented students into top jobs



A former teen Welsh Innovation Awards winner has secured a dream job with a leading tech company, after his GCSE design and technology project scooped the top award in 2016.

Joe Ringrose, now 22, has recently become a full-time electronics design engineer at Cardiff-based company Flintec Ltd after completing a four-year apprenticeship with the company, following his win at the Welsh Innovation Awards when he was just 16 years old.

After reading news of his win and product design in the local paper, Joe was approached directly by Flintec to apply to their apprenticeship programme while he was working at his local rugby club in Aberdare in 2016. Joe took up the opportunity and was successful in his application.

As part of his GCSE Design and Technology coursework, Joe designed and created a washing line alarm device that could detect

rain. Joe's device and others from his design and technology class at St John the Baptist School in Aberdare were put forward for the award, and his was shortlisted. After an exhibition of the top 50 products at Sophia Gardens in Cardiff, Joe's entry was shortlisted to the top three and eventually won the overall prize at the awards ceremony at the Senedd in Cardiff Bay.

Joe's story and success showcases the importance of the Innovation Awards, a joint initiative between the Welsh Government and awarding organisation the WJEC to encourage young people at GCSE, A level and further education colleges to put their skills to use and create new innovative products where there are gaps in the consumer market. The awards help foster a culture of Innovation in Wales which is vitally important for jobs and growth to the Welsh economy. People, businesses, academic institutions, hospitals, schools, the public sector and the Welsh Government itself, all need to be more innovative to thrive in a competitive world, and the Innovation Awards are part of that push.

Speaking about his experience with the Innovation Awards, Joe said: "I wasn't expecting to even get to the top 50, so it was a really great experience. The media recognition I received after winning led me to the career that I'm in now, and I love it. I didn't want to do A levels and was looking for an apprenticeship, but I couldn't find anything that suited me and despite my passion for design and technology, there's



not much around in that sector job-wise and it's not an easy industry to get into."

Joe added: "I don't think I would be where I am today without winning, and I'm just so grateful for it. It was such a great experience and really helped me onto a career path that I'm really good at and passionate about.

"The benefits of the awards go further than just winning too, even being shortlisted is such an achievement and is great to have on your CV. Being associated with the Welsh Innovation Awards opens a lot of doors for creative and talented young people who want to make a career in this industry."

Jason Cates, Design and Technology subject officer at WJEC who was previously Joe's teacher at St John Baptist school in Aberdare, and encouraged Joe to enter his coursework back in 2016.

Speaking about the importance of the Innovation Awards for young people in Wales, as well as promoting the importance of Design and Technology as a subject, he said: "The Innovation Awards are a long

standing vehicle for promoting the subject of Design and Technology where students develop skills including CAD and technical sketching, as well as crossover with the other STEM subjects, during GCSE, AS and A Level coursework projects.

"D&T as a subject is core to encouraging innovative thinking that begins in education and ultimately contributes to the Welsh Government's objectives of creating a more prosperous, equal and resilient Wales.

"The awards are a real chance for students and D&T departments to showcase the truly innovative work they do and the finals of the awards are usually attended by universities, the Royal Navy and Airforce as well as major tech, engineering and design businesses as a chance to recruit the best talent.

"We've had previous winners in Wales on a world stage, from working with astronaut Tim Peake to travelling to events held in Arizona to showcase work.

"Joe's story in particular is an excellent example of the importance of the innovation awards in giving students and schools the chance to share their work with employers and business, helping to act as springboard into high quality, skilled apprenticeships and careers in Wales."

One of Wales' seven Well-being goals from the Future Generations Act 2015 sets out a Prosperous Wales and aims to develop a skilled and well-educated population. The WJEC awards align with the goals set out.

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