

Invershin woman through to top entrepreneur challenge final



Anna Renouf receives her award from members of Converge Challenge.

An enterprising woman from Invershin has been awarded first place out of 30 finalists in the Scottish Converge Challenge Elevator Pitch competition.

Anna Renouf (29), a keen horse rider, had to pitch her idea to develop a new saddle tree design to a team of entrepreneurs during a three-day training session organised by Converge Scotland.

Anna first shared her idea at the Inverness College UHI Create Centre's pan-Highlands and Islands business idea competition, where she won £1500 prizemoney for

Most Innovative Idea and Best Engineering and Technology Idea.

Since then, her concept, which has the potential to dramatically improve the welfare of horses, has wowed leading entrepreneurs across Scotland, picking up a Young Edge Award in late 2015 and first prize at the SIE Fresh Ideas awards earlier this year..

The latest accolade from the Converge Challenge, Scotland's biggest entrepreneurship development programme, will now see Anna compete to win the top prize in September, which is worth £150,000 in prize money and support to make her idea a reality.

Speaking of her success, Anna said: "I've had the idea for some time now, but have been developing it more seriously since entering Create's Business Idea Competition. I believe the design could have a revolutionary impact on horse welfare, as it will transform a design which has stayed the same for hundreds of years.

"Since the competition, my journey to make my idea a reality has really gathered momentum. Entering these challenges has really helped me hone my entrepreneurial skills whilst giving me the conviction that my business idea has real potential.

"What's more, the prize money will help me take my business to the next stage by funding the development of a physical prototype."

Carol Langston, head of Create at Inverness College UHI, added: "We are delighted that our competition has proven to be an important springboard for many budding Highlands and Islands based entrepreneurs.

"Anna really impressed our judges with her innovative idea to radically impact one of our most traditional industries. We are sure that Anna's novel idea and her determined business focus will prove to be a winning combination at the Converge Challenge final in September and we are all hoping for a great outcome."

The Converge Challenge brings together the most ambitious and creative thinkers from academia, research and business.

The programme is funded by eight Scottish Universities and the Scottish Funding Council to give students and staff from all Scottish Universities and Research Institutes the chance to exploit the commercial potential of their inventions.