



The Tech Corridor SDG Innovation Challenge brought together researchers, academics, innovators, entrepreneurs and students for a one-day hackathon, where they tackled challenges set by businesses relating to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Hosted at the impressive STEM Innovation Centre at West Suffolk College as part of the West Suffolk Business Festival, a fast-moving day saw delegates spend the morning brain-storming solutions, before moving into small groups to work up detailed plans for the most promising opportunities identified by the businesses. Here's what we came up with.

## ADNAMS

**The challenge:** "Adnams is company with sustainability in its DNA. We strive to provide exceptional products and services to our customers without costing the earth. For this challenge, can you think of ways in which we can we utilise our surplus land at Reydon in a sustainable way to support our business/community?"

**Potential solutions:** Ideas included a focus on renewable energy, installing solar panels or an anaerobic digestion plant, or turning the land into an education centre to teach people about the brewing process and sustainability. There was also discussion on using the land as an R&D centre or microbrewery for Adnams, rewilding or selling the land, and turning it into a conference centre or holiday retreat.

**The chosen solution:** Adnams was interested in the idea of turning the land into a **social farm**, a facility where the community could come together to grow produce, take part in nature-related activities and improve their health and wellbeing. This would fit with the company's ethos around supporting its community, and help it cultivate locally sourced products.

## ANTISTAT

**The challenge:** "What approaches, technologies or other strategies are available to help Antistat reuse or recycle its antistatic bags at end of life?"

**Potential solutions:** Delegates suggested the company could run awareness campaigns, printing messages about recycling on bags, or having a QR code linking to a recycling information website. The use of new biodegradable materials was discussed, and whether customers would be prepared to pay more for these. Incentives could also be used to encourage customers to recycle.

**The chosen solution:** A **bag reuse and recycling scheme**, to be introduced in conjunction with looking at bags being produced from recycled polymer, was the idea Antistat chose to pursue. Direct customers would return used bags and get a discount on their next order. A similar idea is offered by online supermarkets for carrier bags. Reusing the bags could cut manufacturing costs, fulfil the company's sustainability mission and appeal to socially-minded customers.



## N2S

**The challenge:** "Recognising concerns and challenges around getting rid of end of life electronic devices, how might we put in place new approaches or schemes to encourage businesses to support recycling and to relinquish their out of date equipment?"

**Potential solutions:** Education was a big focus of the N2S challenge, both in terms of educating people on the importance of technology recycling, but also around concerns about data security, which often prevent recycling. Potential new legislation was also discussed, to make companies recycle old tech or obligate vendors to take back old devices they've sold to recycle.

**The chosen solution:** N2S felt it was important to reach out to influential people in businesses, so focused on an **education programme for sustainability officers**. These officers play an increasingly important role in many companies, and N2S has information and metrics which could be supplied to them to help make better decisions and encourage technology recycling.

## SEEDLINK

**The challenge:** "How can small scale farmers be better integrated into western food supply chains such that their produce reaches shops in the developed world?"

**Potential solutions:** Delegates discussed using technologies to help farmers communicate and improve crop yield. Creating a co-operative or union model to give farmers greater critical mass was also a popular idea. Marketing the sustainability credentials of using small farmers versus larger corporates could encourage consumers to change their buying habits

**The chosen solution:** Peer-to-peer support and knowledge sharing would be a simple way to help these farmers. An online forum where people could post questions and join conversations would allow growers to share information, opportunities, and identify gaps in the market where they could all profit. This has low barriers to entry, requiring only an internet-connected device.

## NEXT STEPS

The four companies will now reflect on how they can implement these ideas in their businesses. We hope to provide a further update in the next six weeks. Could you or your company help deliver one of the solutions featured in the Innovation Challenge? Email [info@techcorridor.co.uk](mailto:info@techcorridor.co.uk) or call 07766 886273.