

YORKSHIRE INNOVATION FUND CASE STUDY:

BeeVital



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Partner (SIP): Leeds Beckett University
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The Business...

At the heart of every BeeVital product lies the miraculous properties of a little known substance called propolis. Produced by bees, propolis has been used for thousands of years – ancient Egyptians made use of its antibacterial properties during the mummification process.

Founder James Fearnley established BeeVital in 2002 to research and develop the **medicinal properties of propolis**, a substance made from plant and tree resins which bees use to seal and protect their hives, providing a natural and highly effective external immune system. Inspired by James's interest and passion in natural health, over the past decade BeeVital has evolved from a fledgling operation into a profitable organisation with a **growing reputation as a leading provider of propolis-based health products**. With ranges which include whole health, skincare and oral health, the BeeVital brand extends to over thirty propolis-based products.

From its premises in Whitby, BeeVital serves a niche market which includes natural health practitioners, nutritionists, dentists, homeopaths and independent health food retailers. The company recently signed a supply contract with a leading health supplement distribution company in South Korea.

Today, while James continues to provide strategic direction for BeeVital, the day to day running of the business is overseen by his son Hugo and daughter Cecily.

The Need for Innovation...

Despite healthy growth and a growing reputation as experts in the development and production of propolis products, BeeVital lacked the expertise needed to progress their new product ideas.

In particular, BeeVital wanted to explore the possibility developing an **innovative propolis-based patch** which could promote oral health and prevent gum disease. In 2013 they approached The Yorkshire Innovation Fund to help them take their propolis-based B-Patch to the next stage.

The Role of the Yorkshire Innovation Fund...

A successful application for a Research and Development Project (RDP) funded expertise from the University of Bradford's Centre for Pharmaceutical Engineering. Their research assessed the commercial viability of several new and innovative propolis-based healthcare products. Later feasibility studies on the B-Patch determined that the product could work in practice.

Towards the end of 2014, BeeVital was awarded further funding via a Small Innovation Project (SIP) which enabled product testing on the patch. Led by Margarita Gomez Escalada, Senior Lecturer in Microbiology at Leeds Beckett University, BeeVital were able to determine the impact of their B-Patch on the formation of biofilm, which can cause cavities and gum disease.



"The B-Patch would simply not have happened without the support of the Yorkshire Innovation Fund. Their support was very significant for us."

HUGO FEARNLEY



The Impact...

Although limited impact was noted once biofilm had already formed, **B-Patch did prove successful in inhibiting the formation of biofilm.** This important discovery helped to shape the future of B-Patch as a potential preventative healthcare product. As a result, BeeVital are exploring the possibility of having B-Patch classified as a medical device.

The collaborations with both universities revealed essential information needed to position and market B-Patch and have given BeeVital the confidence to approach the highly competitive but potentially lucrative Japanese market. BeeVital expect to launch their innovative propolis patch within the next twelve months.

“The B-Patch would simply not have happened without the support of the Yorkshire Innovation Fund”, stresses Hugo. “Their support was very significant for us”.

The Future...

Against a backdrop of global concerns about the increasing resistance to synthetic antibiotics in health, farming and food production, Hugo believes propolis will become increasingly important to wellbeing in the future.

“As a natural product, propolis is complex and continually evolving – this constant state of change means its antibacterial properties will remain effective, while infections may develop resistance to chemically simpler synthetic drugs”, explains Hugo.

“By harnessing the antibacterial power of propolis, we have an opportunity to change the current mind-set on how infections are tackled in future.”



Raw propolis, from the frames of cultivated beehives

About The Yorkshire Innovation Fund...

The Yorkshire Innovation Fund brings together ten of the region's higher education institutions to help small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Yorkshire and Humber region to grow.

Part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the fund helps small businesses to develop ideas for new products, services or processes by funding collaborative projects with the region's universities, drawing on their expertise, specialist equipment or facilities to develop ideas which result in business growth.

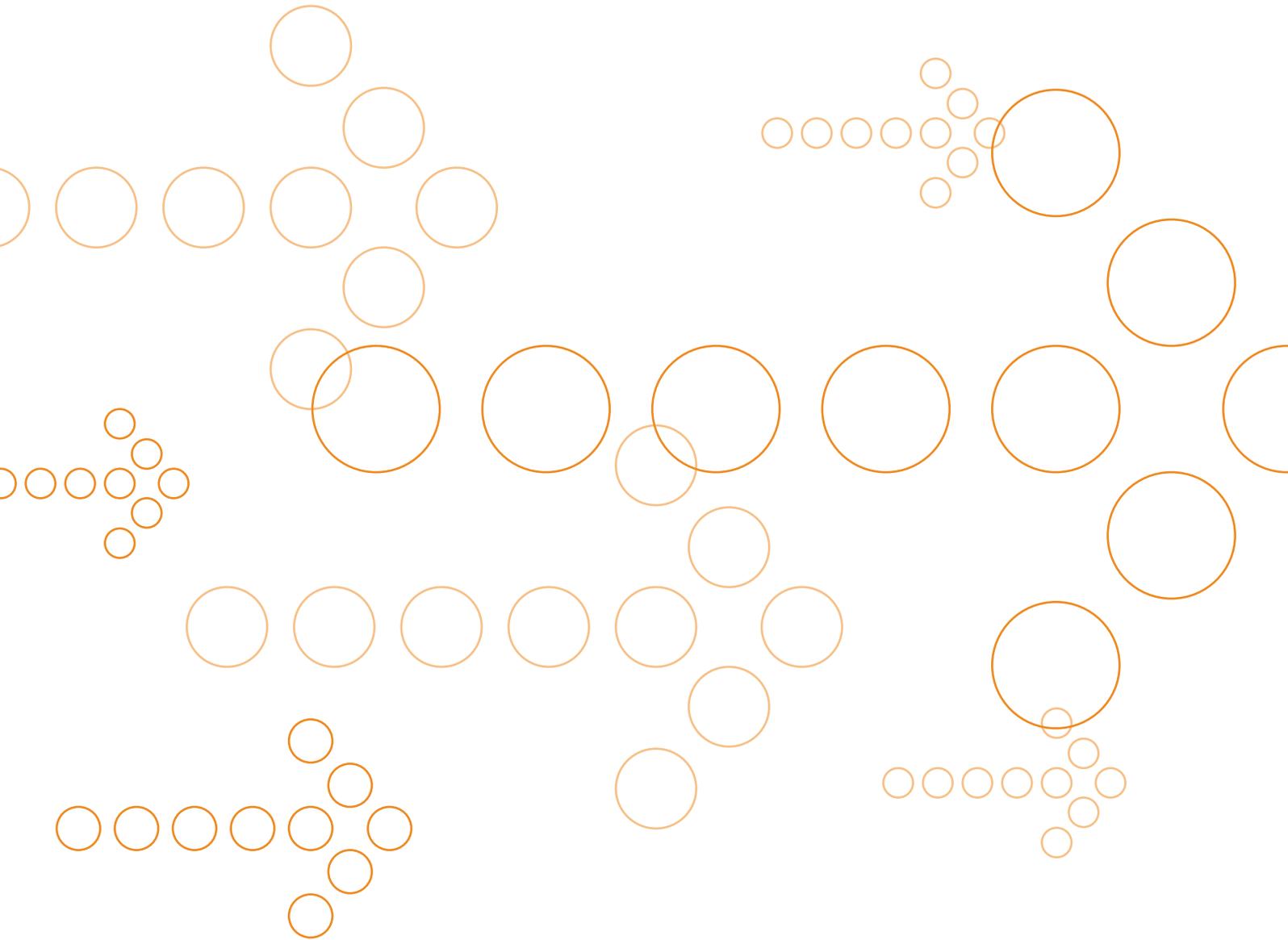
The project has attracted £3.06million of investment from the ERDF as part of Europe's support for local economic development through the Yorkshire and Humber ERDF Programme 2007-13. Partner universities contributed a further £1.87m, bringing the total investment to £4.93m. The project team are based at the University of Bradford.

The delivery partners are: The University of Bradford, The University of Huddersfield, The University of Hull, The University of Leeds, Leeds Beckett University, Leeds College of Music, Leeds Trinity University, Sheffield Hallam University, The University of York, York St John University. The University of Sheffield is a strategic partner.

Yorkshire Innovation Fund

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Funding access to University
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