Top five early-stage tech companies from Scotland announced in Tech Nation's latest 'Rising Stars' competition

- Tech Nation announces the top five Scotland Regional Winners of its fourth Rising Stars competition, recognising the UK's early-stage tech scaleups with the highest potential
- The 5 companies to be selected from Scotland are Edinburgh-based Kythera AI, Letting Cloud and Polydigi Tech, and Glasgow-based Gigged.AI and Know-it, which span tech subsectors AI, HRtech, cybersecurity, proptech and fintech
- The tech sector in Scotland is rapidly growing; the sector has received $549mn in VC investment funding this year, as of November 2021 (a 56% increase on the $352mn received in 2020), and has created 111% more jobs compared to the previous year (73,048 in H1 of 2021, up from 34,636 in 2020)

1st December 2021: Tech Nation has today announced the 5 Scotland Regional Winners of its fourth Rising Stars competition, which recognises the brightest and best early-stage tech scaleups from every area of the UK. In total, 55 fast-growing tech companies from across the UK have been named this year's Regional Winners - 5 within each UK region.

These Regional Winners have been selected by a panel of over 50 judges (industry experts with extensive experience in starting and scaling tech businesses) based on their value proposition, competitive advantage, market traction, team experience and potential to scale.

This year's Scotland Regional Winners are Kythera AI, Letting Cloud, PolyDigi Tech, Gigged.AI and Know-it. These companies, which hail from Edinburgh and Glasgow - Scotland's two largest tech hubs - are working to transform a range of different industries, including AI, cybersecurity, HRtech, proptech and fintech.

These 5 early-stage tech companies have an average of 8 employees, and are notably all either B2B or B2B2C companies.

Scotland's tech sector is growing

The success of these early-stage Scottish companies reflects the strength and fast growth of Scotland's tech sector overall.

According to data from Tech Nation, Scotland is now home to 4 tech 'unicorns' (companies valued at over $1bn), up from 3 in 2020, and has received $549mn in VC investment funding this year, as of November 2021 (a 56% increase on the $352mn received in 2020).

Tech job creation is also growing rapidly in Scotland, rising by 111% in the past year (from 34,636 tech roles in 2020 to 74,048 in H1 of 2021).

This year's Rising Stars Regional Winners are accelerating the tech sector across the UK

This year's Regional Winners demonstrate that the tech sector is growing quickly across all corners of the UK.

An impressive 69% of the 55 Regional Winners are generating revenue, and 38% have at least one female founder. 27% of the Regional Finalists are Pre-Seed, 29% have no previous rounds of funding, and 36% are Seed funded. As for what's next, 49% of the Regional Finalists are looking for Seed Funding, while 34% are looking to raise Series A.

The 55 Regional Winners are a mixture of B2B and B2C and 49% have previously attended an accelerator. 73% of the Regional Winners plan to expand internationally in the next 12 months, with 58% wanting to expand into the USA.

Previous years' Rising Stars Regional Winners have included Selazar (from Northern Ireland), Circa5000 (from the North West) and SeedLegals (from London), who have received a combined £33.79mn in investment to date, demonstrating the ability of the Rising Stars Regional Winners to scale quickly, and their potential to become the UK's tech 'unicorns' (companies with valuations of $1bn+) of the future.

Rising Stars' mission

Going forward, these 5 promising, fast-growth Scottish early-stage tech companies will continue to be supported by the UK tech ecosystem as they are inducted into the Tech Nation alumni network. This will allow the companies national recognition, greater access to networking opportunities and more opportunities to learn from other early-stage tech businesses going through a similar scaling journey.

Recognising and empowering all of the Regional Winners of the Rising Stars competition is at the core of Tech Nation's mission to fuel the growth of tech scaleups who are helping to create a stronger economy, society and future.

Quotes:

Esme Caulfield, Competitions Lead at Tech Nation, said: "With Tech Nation's Rising Stars competition now in its fourth year, it's amazing to see so many inspiring companies innovating to change our world for the better. This year, we reached the milestone of 1000 applications to Rising Stars (and surpassed it!). We had a record number of applications this year - 380 (nearly 400) - and we also saw our first applications - and our first Regional Winner - from the spacetech sector, (Elestial, from the Midlands) and agritech (Cropsafe, from Northern Ireland).

From revolutionising modern healthcare and disrupting the finance sector to transforming education and tackling climate change, each of these fast-growing regional early-stage tech companies is helping us improve our economy, society and quality of life. This year's Regional Winners represent the brightest and the best of UK tech and talent, and I'm excited to see what they do next. I'm also really looking forward to seeing the new tech companies that emerge and scale across all areas of Scotland over the coming year, with the help of Scotland's vibrant and supportive tech ecosystem."

Nicola McNeely, Partner at Harrison Clark Rickerbys Solicitors - Cardiff and Rising Stars 4.0 Judge, said: "It is evident from the Tech Nation's Rising Stars Regional Winners that there is a vast array of technology startups and scaleups around the UK, many of whom are operating within known Tech clusters already. Some have chosen to specifically establish themselves there or to relocate to these areas to leverage the incubator or accelerator services within those tech clusters. The ability to operate alongside like-minded businesses equips them well to leverage contacts, connections, services and expertise from similar businesses in their area. It also positions them well to sell into primes who are interested in diversifying their customer offering and adopting new innovative tech solutions."

Drew Currie, Director of the Founder Institute - Birmingham and Rising Stars 4.0 Judge, said: "Two of the Rising Star candidates which I judged were extraordinary! I have judged pitches previously, but these 2 were exceptional. I have written their names on a piece of paper, and sealed them in dated envelopes. On the back of their Tech Nation entry, I look forward in a few years time to opening those envelopes in front of them & toasting their success!"

Niki Haggerty-James, Ecosystem Manager at Barclays Eagle Labs and Rising Stars 4.0 Judge, said: "I was honoured to be a judge for the fourth year, for Tech Nation's Rising Stars programme. It seems the calibre of start-up and scaling-up businesses is getting better year on year, which is reflected in the businesses we are seeing here at Barclays Eagle Labs. When times become challenging, the best entrepreneurs see it as an opportunity to innovate and adapt. I predict exciting times ahead for this year's cohort."

Daniel Evans, CEO of Birmingham Enterprise Community and Rising Stars 4.0 Judge, said: "Rising Stars aims to find the UK's very best emerging startups and this year's applications did not disappoint. As we look forward to the country's recovery from COVID and the events of the past 2 years, we need our entrepreneurs more than ever. They fuel innovation and tackle the problems we face by building solutions that change the way we live, work and operate as a society. Through Rising Stars, Tech Nation is able to help showcase some of these fantastic entrepreneurs and bring attention to the work they are doing. One thing is for sure, if the quality of these businesses is anything to go by, then the entrepreneurial future of the UK is looking stronger than ever."

Grant MacCusker, CEO and Founder of Letting Cloud, said: "It is great to see so many local companies being represented in the Rising Stars competition 2021. Every founder and team work hard to create success in their business and it shows the bar has been raised again with the names that are in the semi finals."

Rich Wilson, CEO and Founder of Gigged.AI, said: "Gigged.AI is delighted to be a Tech Nation Rising Stars 4.0 Scotland Regional Winner. Previous winners have gone on to achieve global success and we are excited by the platform this will give the company to scale. Our AI-powered talent marketplaces are poised to disrupt how companies source and on-board talent."

Monika Ohashi, CIO at Polydigi Tech, said: "Our mission at Polydigi Tech is to help businesses combat the ever-changing fraud, and that's why we developed the world's first identity

authentication solution that can effectively end phishing and OTP (one-time-passcode) scams technically. We can't express how excited we are to be chosen as the Rising Stars 4.0 Scotland Regional Winner. We hope with this recognition and the help from Tech Nation we can take a big step to the next stage. After Polydigi Tech relocated to Edinburgh in 2019, we have been supported in many ways by Scottish Development International and local FinTech communities such as FinTech Scotland since we started our journey here. This helped immensely in establishing our presence here."

Joy Thurston, Operations Coordinator at Kythera AI, said: "We're delighted to be a Rising Stars Regional Winner at what's already a crucial and exciting time for us as we expand into new markets and grow our team. Our innovative AI tools make an enormous difference to game design, and we are working on new ways to bring life to all our virtual worlds and change the way we look at games entirely. We're committed to leading the field in game AI and setting an example in supporting the fulfillment and wellbeing of our staff. We're grateful to be recognised for this and for the opportunities this award presents. We have experienced wonderful support so far from the Scottish government, in the form of an innovation grant which allowed us to establish our product. As well as this, the Scottish tech sector as a community has been an enormous help to us. As tenants of Codebase Edinburgh, we gain valuable access to networking and training events as well as connections with other local tech firms."

Darcey Quigley, Founder and CEO of Know-it, said: "It is a great honour to be representing Scotland in such a prestigious awards competition. We hope this will help raise awareness of the £61 billion late payment problem currently impacting UK SMEs. With the recent launch of our innovative credit management fintech platform "Know-it", we aim to reduce the amount of money outstanding to SMEs by helping facilitate the chasing and collection of this money, whilst mitigating future credit risk, reducing debtor days and helping boost cashflow!"

End

Notes to the editor:

About the Scottish Regional Winners:

[Gigged.AI](#) - Glasgow - AI and HRtech
Gigged.AI is a digital talent platform powered by Artificial Intelligence. Their cutting-edge technology allows UK-based companies to accelerate digital projects by tapping into on-demand talent.

[Kythera AI](#) - Edinburgh - AI
Kythera AI is a middleware provider specialising in advanced tools for designing AI in 3D game engines including, but not limited to Unreal Engine, Open 3D Engine & Unity. Their mission is to improve the overall quality of the design and experience of AI in games and other simulations, by pushing the boundaries of technology and producing improved solutions to the problems faced today.

[Letting Cloud](#) - Edinburgh - Proptech
Letting Cloud is dedicated to changing the way people search and let property - in a trustworthy and transparent way. Letting Cloud's platform aims to bring everyone in the letting industry together under one community cloud, to give everyone a better experience and match people and property in a modern way with purpose.

[Polydigi Tech](#) - Edinburgh - Cybersecurity
Polydigi Tech's mission is to protect the Data and Identities of companies and individuals with innovative authentication solutions suitable for banking, payments, IoT services and more. The solutions provide high security that is easy to integrate, implement and use and will also reduce the ongoing cost of protecting assets and identity.

[Know-it](#) - Glasgow - Fintech
Cloud-based credit management platform Know-it streamlines the credit control process so you can credit check and monitor customers, mitigate credit risks, chase payment, collect overdue unpaid invoices and so much more, all in one place.

Company photos:

Please find images of the companies' logos and founders [here](#), and of their teams [here](#).

About the Rising Stars competition:

Rising Stars 4.0 is the UK's only truly national scaleup competition, designed to be accessible to the best early-stage tech companies from all areas of the country. Entrants are supported throughout the application process, and given training and support at each stage of the competition to enable them to compete to their best ability and deliver the perfect pitch. The competition culminates in the top 20 companies being showcased and promoted to a highly curated audience of investors, corporates, influencers and the wider tech ecosystem. The judging panel then deliberate over the final 20, selecting 10 companies to be named as this year's Rising Stars, who will feature in a high-profile celebration event on 24 March 2022.

Eligibility criteria for the Rising Stars competition:

- Seed to pre-Series A funding stage OR if revenue focused, generating annual revenues below £1.5mn
- A digital tech business with a product or service to sell
- At least one active client or pilot
- Able to demonstrate market traction
- HQ'd in UK
- Company incorporated between 1-3 years
- Able to commit to key dates in the Rising Stars calendar

About Tech Nation:

Tech Nation is the leading growth platform for UK tech scaleups. Tech Nation fuels the growth of game-changing founders, leaders, and scaling companies so they can positively transform societies and economies. We provide them with the coaching, content, and community they need for their journey in designing the future. Tech Nation has years of experience facilitating and helping UK tech companies scale, both at home and abroad. Over 30 cohorts and 900 companies have successfully graduated from Tech Nation's growth programmes. Alumni include Skyscanner, Darktrace, and Monzo, as well as 3 of the UK's 7 new 'decacorns'; Revolut, Wise, and Farfetch.