

‘Swikini’ and self-cleaning path among UK inventions in 2022

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A swimsuit designed to look like a bikini, a system to make sure you never get sad text messages when you're feeling low and a path that automatically washes away dog mess were just some of the creative ideas UK-based inventors came up with in 2022. A Guardian analysis of the UK's Intellectual Property Office (IPO) register found 6,416 patent applications registered to at least one UK inventor were published last year. The inventions included a smart section of path that can detect when a dog has been on it, and then release a wave of liquid to automatically clean any faeces into the sewer. The device, invented by Susan Herman of Beaumaris, Wales, can optionally sense when the animal has left the area before releasing the water, meaning dogs do not become scared and then avoid that section of path (or corner of the garden). It was granted a patent in August last year. Samantha Brindley, from Middlewich in Cheshire, invented a swimsuit that looks like a bikini using a piece of plastic or mesh something to imitate a midriff. Named the "swikini", the design helps people who may feel conscious of their midriff being exposed but would still like the feeling of wearing a bikini. "I always felt insecure wearing a standard bikini due to my stretch marks left after having my first son," Brindley told the Guardian. She added: "There was nothing on the market anywhere that would replicate a bikini being worn but could disguise my stretch marks. I found after much research that I was not alone in my search as many other ladies like myself felt insecure with our tummies on show, be it on the beach or a local swimming baths. "So I designed the Swikini, which creates the optical illusion of a standard bikini being worn, yet is a full swimsuit so it is extremely comfortable and practical to wear. So far people have loved it." Most of the inventions on the list were highly technical or mechanical. However, others were more immediately practical, commercial products that could be useful to members of the public. These included a cricket training aid in the shape of a batsman, a pair of tongs for perfectly piercing shisha foil, a bed covering with less insulation over the genital area to encourage male fertility, an oven with an automatic tray, a urine collection system for fighter pilots, and a wearable device that helps monitor and manage Parkinson's tremors. At least one of the devices has featured on the TV show Dragons' Den. Victoria Miller, from Glasgow, filed a patent for a watch-style device that can let parents know when a child is ready to go to sleep by monitoring their temperature cycle. On the show she accepted an offer from Sara Davies for £150,000 for 35% of the business. The Guardian analysis found that Winchester had the highest number of inventions compared with its population in 2022, with 148 for every 100,000 people. Many of these inventions were registered through the IBM research and development office in Hursley Park. These included a system that would use speech and facial biometrics to deliver text messages to you at the appropriate moment. Invented by Peeyush and Priyansh Jaiswal, the device analysis your mood using speech and face patterns, as

well as the mood of the text message, and delays notifying you about a new text message until you are in the right mood to read it. Winchester was followed by South Cambridgeshire (122 inventions per 100,000 people), Westminster (121) and Cambridge (111). The figures also give an insight into the UK's most innovative companies. Dyson led the list, with 234 patents registered, including several for its Dyson Zone air purification headphones. It was followed by IBM (174), Jaguar Land Rover (158) and Imagination Technologies Ltd (94). The secretary of state for defence was responsible for 25 patent applications published last year, including radio sensors, a drone detection device and a method to prevent a door from having its lock picked. Of the 6,416 patents registered to a UK inventor on the list, 34% had been granted at the time of writing, with a further 19% awaiting their first examination. Just under 8% were terminated before being granted a patent. Many of the patents published last year were influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic. There were 22 with "face mask" in the title, and seven mentioning Covid-19 or coronavirus.