PRME

Sharing Information on Progress Report
April 2018

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Principles for Responsible Management Education

Newcastle University Business School Sharing Information on Progress 2016-17
Director’s Letter of Renewed Commitment to Principles for Responsible Management Education

Newcastle University Business School (NUBS) has now been a signatory to the Principles of Responsible Management Education (PRME) for eight years. I am pleased to be able to have the opportunity to consolidate and reaffirm NUBS’ responsibility as a signatory through our fourth Sharing Information on Progress (SIP) report for the period 2016-17.

In today’s global business environment the importance of a good management education can provide a crucial foundation upon which to build a better world. We continue to develop our provision to support new generations of leaders who will address the increasingly complex challenges that we all face as a society. The School is committed to maximising the intellectual, social and economic potential of all the individuals, organisations and communities it is involved with through outstanding teaching, research and innovation activity. Through these activities the School promotes the wider university values as a civic university with a global reputation for academic excellence and we at NUBS are responding to some of the most pressing needs within society.

The School’s mission, vision and values are underpinned by our commitment to the education of responsible management leaders. These incorporate the need to be innovative and are emphasized through our values that characterize all our activities. The particular achievements that demonstrate our commitment to PRME from the last two years are: a continued and ongoing engagement with all our stakeholders; the School’s contribution to the University’s societal themes of Ageing, Sustainability and Social Renewal, the activities within our subject groups and relevant developments within our teaching provision and current research and publications from our research groups and centres.

We have a strong vision that embraces the core of PRME through our aspiration to be an internationally recognised Business School. Our aim is to have a world-leading research reputation across a range of disciplines, including: critical accounting; economics; human resources management; innovation systems; services marketing; and strategy, organisations and society. We will further develop our distinctive pedagogy, incorporating a more blended learning approach and a commitment to Lifelong Learning, producing a student experience that is highly rewarding and challenging.

The School is continually working with international partners and external networks from large international organisations to small local voluntary groups to both develop and strengthen our continued commitment to PRME.

Professor Sharon Mavin
March 2018
Principle 1 Purpose

We will develop the capabilities of students to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy.

Newcastle University has always focused on academic excellence and the impact of academic work. Today, these long-held ideals are more relevant than ever. They define our vision for the University – the kind of university we wish to be. At Newcastle we seek to address some of the key global societal issues through our research in three areas: ageing, social renewal, sustainability.

Newcastle University vision and values

The combination of being globally ambitious and regionally rooted forms the basis for Newcastle University’s vision for the future. We believe in, and strive for, world-class academic excellence – but excellence with a purpose.

We work on the supply side of knowledge creation and dissemination, and respond to the demand side of societal challenges. We are a large employer and a magnet for tens of thousands of young people, and form an integral part of civil society. That is the hallmark of a civic university.

The search for a combination of global excellence and local relevance is one replicated in many places in the world. We believe that our success as a civic university is key to responding to some of the most pressing needs of society, Newcastle University developed the concept of societal challenge themes, under which we now group a significant part of our endeavours. By shaping our activities in this way, we hope to help society at large to better understand where we can help make a difference – and the University can demonstrate its commitment to excellence with impact.

The themes are rooted in three clear principles: firstly, they are issue to which we have real expertise to contribute, secondly, they are topics of major global interest but also ones which have significant resonance in the United Kingdom; and finally, they are areas which we have developed genuine engagement with the public and numerous stakeholder communities so that we have a deep understanding of the issues. Overall, the three themes are a striking illustration of the University’s strategy of both academic excellence – our capability- and our status as a civic university which drives our commitment.
Principle 2 Values

We will incorporate into our academic activities and curricula the values of global social responsibility as portrayed in international initiatives such as the United Nations Global Compact.

About Newcastle University Business School

Challenge today, Change tomorrow

At Newcastle University Business School, we believe that Business is shaped by the desire to think differently and the will to transform the status quo. And our driving purpose is to push the boundaries of knowledge by facilitating shared enquiry and bold thinking through our research, teaching and business networks.

As part of Newcastle University, we are a member of the Russell Group, which is the association of the leading research-intensive UK universities. As a School we nourish fresh forms of intellectual enquiry and research by fostering distinct academic research communities. We attract world-leading researchers from across the world and these are individuals who are ready for change and eager for challenge. They want to expand fields of research and academic excellence, and redefine the future of society and business.

Vision and Mission

Our vision, mission and values support our world class staff and high flying students to expand fields of research and academic excellence, and redefine the future of society and business.

Vision

To be an internationally excellent business school known for our academic ambition, distinctive community and influence in building a responsible future for both business and society globally.
Mission

Through vibrant collaboration, we drive excellence in teaching and research to create opportunity for our students, staff and partners – inspiring new global perspectives that contribute to and shape a responsible future for both business and society.

Values

Quality, integrity, impact
We are committed to improving business thinking. Our socially and ethically responsible practices extend to our staff, our students and our stakeholders. Our work should impact and shape organisations across the globe.

Bold ambition
In our quest for excellence we encourage examining minds and bold thinking. In an ever-changing world, our students and staff must be ready to embrace challenges, take action, and work across disciplines to see beyond the accepted norms.

Global Influence
Through our staff, students, alumni and partners we see the world through a global lens and seek to influence on a global scale.

Collaboration and knowledge exchange
We are a hub of shared enquiry and discovery where individuals learn from and collaborate with peers, experts and business leaders. We unite opportunities, people and cultures developing collective knowledge to define the future of business.
Principle 3 Method

We will create educational frameworks, materials, processes and environments that enable effective learning experiences for responsible leadership.

NUBS is a large and diverse School comprising four subject areas:

- Accounting and Finance
- Economics
- Leadership, Work & Organisations

These four subject areas enable NUBS to provide a diverse provision of programmes that include different approaches to teaching, research and engagement. The programmes provide strong links to the issues and demands of managing organisations and the social and environmental impacts of all business enterprises. The approach to student learning at NUBS is focussed on developing innovation, entrepreneurialism through responsible leadership. Our graduates are equipped with skills that help the address real global issues and exemplify the ethos of PRME. The issues we believe are central to PRME such as sustainability, human rights corporate responsibility. Some examples of how these issues are embedded within our modules across both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are provided below.

Our modules reflect our large and diverse provision across all our undergraduate and postgraduate courses. We currently offer over 48 modules that cover these issues.

Undergraduate Modules

BUS1002 Global Business Environment (UG 1st year core module in the N200 programme)

This module examines the macro-economic and political forces that influence the development and functioning of the global business environment. Of particular interest is the development of today’s international regime of global governance. The module examines the mechanisms and issues involved the proliferation of ‘soft’ regulation at the international level. More specifically, a lecture is dedicated to the analysis of the role of the UN Global Compact and its approach to promoting
corporate self-regulation. The module also addresses trends in the internationalisation of business and in the evolving relationship between business and society, as one lecture is focused on the management of CSR practices in multinational corporations.

BUS1004 Critical perspectives on business growth
Introduces students to the concept of business growth whilst considering how nuanced theoretical questions and issues relate to the concept of business growth, e.g. to consider the ethicality of some business growth, to consider how gender and business growth intersect and to examine how a person’s identity is linked to their business growth. Examination of what sort of people grow businesses and the features of those people who grow businesses (their risk taking behaviours, their opportunity identification, their creativity etc.). Consideration of how business growth and entrepreneurship can impact society – both positively and negatively - at the micro and macro levels. Encourage students to think critically about business growth and those who practice it in a multi-disciplinary way, drawing on thought in paradigms including philosophy, anthropology, sociology and psychology as well as the traditional business literature.

MKT2009 Strategic Marketing
Marketing strategy is a process that can allow a business to concentrate its resources on the optimal opportunities with the goals of increasing sales and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage. Marketing strategy includes all basic and long-term activities in the field of marketing that deal with the analysis of the strategic initial situation of a business and the formulation, evaluation and selection of market-oriented strategies. How businesses plan, develop, and implement marketing strategies is the focus of this module. To achieve this focus, this module provides a systematic, practical, straightforward approach to analysing, planning, and implementing marketing strategies. This approach focuses on real-world applications and practical methods of marketing planning, including the process of developing a marketing plan.

The module approach initially is to provide a comprehensive planning framework based on conducting sound background research, developing market capabilities and competitive advantages, designing integrated marketing programs, and managing customer relationships for the long term. This module also emphasises the need for integrity in the strategic planning process, as well as the design of marketing programs that are both ethical and socially responsible. An emphasis on critical thinking (both analytical and creative) enables students to understand the essence of how marketing decisions fit together to create a coherent strategy. Throughout the module, examples of successful planning and implementation to illustrate how firms face the challenges of marketing strategy in today’s economy will be provided. In particular, this module will be delivered through introducing relevant literature, learning experiences, and industry-linked case studies; so that theory and practice go together.

BUS3054 Strategy, Organizations and Society
Strategy is an obligatory passage point which connects the interior world of an organization with the exterior domain in which it operates. While Strategy has crowned itself as the queen of the management sciences, this module will critically
scrutinise its legitimacy. Journeying down the brightly-lit boulevards of strategy, the module will tour through the central plazas of strategic thought. It will also venture to the edgier side of town, going down to cool cafes in dimly-lit alleyways to take in critique, controversy and the latest in innovative thinking. The module aims to be an exciting sojourn through this mysterious concept we term strategy.

Viewing strategy as a powerful language game – an esperanto for corporate elites – the module will critically interrogate the historical antecedents of strategy, the central currents of strategic thought, and cutting edge issues in strategy. It will explore strategy in the context of globalization. The module will argue that power, politics and realpolitick are central to understanding strategy. Contemporary and historical examples from corporate, public and political life will be used. The module will connect strategy with broader issues in organizations and society.

BUS3035 Contemporary Issues in International and Comparative Business
This module will provide a cutting edge overview of the very latest thinking and practice in international business and management. It will provide a challenging and eclectic range of perspectives on globalization, multinational corporations, varieties of capitalism and international business. The module will build on knowledge from previous modules and bring together contemporary issues pertinent to the areas of organization studies, sociology, HRM, economic geography and international business, to help participants to develop a critical understanding of contemporary organizations and the increasingly global environment in which they operate.

BUS3017 Corporate Social Responsibility and Ethics (UG 3rd year, N200 programme, elective module)
This module, which includes 30 hours of lectures and 4 hours of seminars, aims to provide students with an in-depth ethical reflection on the relationship between business and society as well as an analysis of the management of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices within corporations. The module explores the main theoretical perspectives on business ethics and CSR. It also addresses the debates around the changing role of corporations in relation to sustainability challenges (such as climate change and human rights).
Postgraduate Modules

NBS8045 The International Business Environment
To enable students to become aware of the macro-economic, institutional and political forces influencing the development and regulation of the global business environment. By examining the macro-economic, institutional and political forces that influence the development and functioning of the global business environment, this module provides a comprehensive survey of the complex and dynamic international environment in which organisations operate. Areas covered include:
- locating globalisation in a historical context
- background to and reasons for today’s international regimes of global governance
- development and regulation of global trade, investment and finance
- changing role of the state within the global environment
- increasing internationalisation of business
- trends in the evolving relationship between business and society

NBS8513 Role of Business in Society - Issues and Challenges
The aim of this module is to develop in students a critical appreciation of issues and debates concerning the changing role and responsibilities of international business in relation to business's interaction with global society and its involvement in, and impact on, major issues confronting society as a result of globalisation.

This module starts by examining the origins and history of ideas of corporate social responsibility (CSR). It then considers recent trends and developments in CSR. This enables us to position the activities of business in relation to wider social issues. The rest of the module will then focus on understanding a selection of the major issues confronting global society today, with specific reference to the role of business in relation to the issue and how this presents challenges and opportunities for responsible business in the future.

NBS8139 Enterprise and Entrepreneurial Management: A Critical Exploration
This module gives students an opportunity to develop an awareness of the role of enterprise and entrepreneurial management in the economy and society, the pursuit of enterprise opportunities in different contexts and the key factors influencing the development and dynamics of enterprise and entrepreneurial management. This is explored through three different perspectives or lens: the enterprising individual, enterprise and entrepreneurial management in organisations and the entrepreneurial task environment. The module is focused on critically integrating theoretical perspectives around the study of enterprise and entrepreneurial management with practical experiences and insights, as opposed to training the student to start and manage a small business itself.

NBS8270 Human Resource Management in the Global Context
This module aims to provide students with an understanding of the principal internal and external environmental contexts of contemporary organisations, including the managerial and business context, within which managers, HR professionals and workers interact in conditions of environmental turbulence, change and uncertainty. The module examines how those leading organisations respond to these dynamic

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environmental contexts. The module indicates how leaders in organisations, leaders in the HR function, and line managers with HR responsibilities, need to recognise and acknowledge that corporate decisions and HR choices are not always shaped by managers alone.

**NBS8279 Managing International Employment Relations**

This module will provide students with a comprehensive understanding of employment relations perspectives and debates, both national and international, from a theoretical and behavioural competency perspective. It will enable students to understand, analyse and evaluate competing theories and perspectives associated with managing employment relations strategies and their outcomes on organisational climate, employees and management.

Students are provided with opportunities to critically apply the activities, knowledge and behavioural competencies required for managing employment relations practices in union and non-union, small and large, private, public and indigenous and multinational organisations. Students will also be able to assess the impact of contextual changes on employment relations practices and organisational performance from a managerial perspective, and gain insights into the creation and implementation of effective employment relations procedures and policies. Students are required to reflect critically on theory and practice from an ethical and professional standpoint, and given opportunities for applied learning and continuous professional development.

**NBS8060 International Business Strategy (PG module, MSc IBM programme)**

This module aims to provide students with an advanced appreciation of the concept and practice of business strategy within a global context. It examines issues such as globalisation, global governance and the relationship between business and society. Through the use of videos and lecture material the module invites students to consider the reasons why firms engage in self-regulation as well as discuss the new role for corporations in addressing global societal issues such as modern slavery. It helps students put the knowledge gained from the course to practical use through the use of case studies. For example, one seminar is dedicated to the discussion of the case “The evolution of ‘sustainability’ in corporate practices: The case of Procter and Gamble”.

**Business School students go global with Global Experience Opportunity**

Stage Two Business School undergraduates have the opportunity of a lifetime with internships abroad to gain global experience that will boost their graduate job prospects. International internships are a chance to boost employability and develop work experience that is valued by future employers. Stage Two Business School students have the opportunity to take part in four-six week internships across the globe during the summer vacation period.
We currently offer programmes in India, China, Tanzania and Rwanda, working with prestigious organisations including the Reserve Bank of India and Tata Group.

These unique opportunities also allow you to work abroad with students from some of our partner institutions:

- Boston University Questrom School of Business (USA)
- University of Groningen, Faculty of Economics (Netherlands)
- Xiamen University School of Management (China)
- Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad (India)

Student Volunteering

**Student Community Action Newcastle (SCAN)**
SCAN is part of Newcastle University Student Union and helps students and staff to find the ideal community volunteering opportunity for you within the city. Anyone can volunteer, it doesn’t matter who you are or what experience you have, but this kind of experience will make you stand out as an ethically aware graduate ready for the world of international business.

**Inter-Cultural Youth Exchange UK (ICYE-UK)**
ICYE-UK is a registered charity and is part of an international federation of exchange NGOs that place volunteers on social, community and environmental projects worldwide for between three weeks and 12 months. Placements enable individuals to live and volunteer in another country, learn a new language, gain a true insight into another culture, and a better understanding of their own and other people’s lives. ICYE-UK also provides voluntary placements with local charities in the UK for individuals from all over the world.

**International Service**
International Service is a development charity which empowers some of the world’s most marginalised people in Latin America, the Middle East and West Africa. The organisation offers volunteer placements working in areas such as female empowerment, disability rights and child poverty.
COCO
COCO is an international children’s charity based in Newcastle. COCO works with communities in remote regions overseas to alleviate poverty which prevents children from receiving an education. They aim to undertake projects which not only change lives, but are sustainable so that eventually their assistance will not be required. COCO look for office volunteers, as well as people to help with overseas projects.

Virtual Volunteering
Working from home as a volunteer is flexible around study commitments. There are links to the United Nations volunteering service, connecting volunteers with organisations working for sustainable development.

Global Business Case Competition
The Global Business Case Competition (GBCC) is an annual international case competition that brings together undergraduate university students from the United States and 12 - 14 other countries to compete in a fast-paced and challenging business case study. Starting in 1999 as the Global Business Challenge, this provides students a chance to build cross-cultural relationships, experience the city of Seattle and most importantly, participate in a real-world case study to analyse and develop a business recommendation within 48 hours.

The career profile of Ben Margretts a BA Business Management graduate, as founder of the charity ‘Chance to Grow’ provides advice to current students who wish to volunteer.

While in Kenya I volunteered at Great Mercy orphanage, which was set up by an inspiring local family who had very little themselves. They had given up their family home and were housing 30 children who had lost their families to illness or post-election violence. Despite their best efforts there was limited access to education for the children and facilities were poor. Inspired by the families generosity I began fundraising to help them improve their facilities and provide education to the children they were supporting and others in the community who were not accessing education.

Upon my return to the UK I continued to fundraise, and in 2010 I revisited the orphanage and school with two other Newcastle graduates to complete development of a primary school and support the purchase of land for a secondary school. After my second trip I organized a meeting with other previous volunteers and established the UK registered charity Chance to Grow to empower disadvantaged young people in Kenya.

I continue to run the charity in my spare time and I have raised over £180,000 for the charity to date. This has allowed us to expand Great Mercy, significantly improve its facilities, register both a primary school and secondary school with the Kenyan government, supported the centres sustainability, introduced therapeutic play for traumatized children, developed children’s rights clubs and developed community farming projects that produce food and income for the schools as well as offering training in a diverse range of farming techniques to impoverished farmers.
My work with Chance to Grow inspired me to pursue a career in the charity sector and shortly after registering the charity I began a career as a fundraising assistant at the NSPCC. After 12 months in post I was promoted to regional fundraising manager. I continued in this role for two years before being offered a six month management role at the Tropical Health and Education Trust. I am currently studying a Master’s in Education, Health Promotion and International Development at UCL and I am hoping to take up the role of CEO of Chance to Grow when I graduate.

Advice for current students

I think that the most important thing I have learned from my short career so far is that doing something that you enjoy and feel passionate about is incredibly important and makes working life and free time much more relaxing and enjoyable. We will all have to work for a very long time so don’t be afraid to try something new or take risks if it will help you to pursue something that you want to do, whether that’s in your working life or in your personal life.
**Principle 4 Research**

*We will engage in conceptual and empirical research that advances our understanding about the role, dynamics, and impact of corporations in the creation of sustainable social, environmental and economic value.*

**Our research groups**

We have highlighted projects and profiled a selection of academics over the course of the next few pages in our six areas of specialist expertise: Accounting, Governance and Accountability; Economics; Human Resource Management, Work and Employment; Innovation Systems; Services Marketing; and Strategy, Organisations and Society.

Our research groups are designed to facilitate and support research in the Business School, bringing together collaborative researchers, while providing a hub for intellectual engagement and innovation.

It is through our research groups that we carry out research that aims to have a global perspective and contribute to the responsible and ethical shaping of society. Researchers in the Business School also connect with the wider University, in particular to address Newcastle University’s societal challenge themes: Ageing; Social Renewal; and Sustainability.

**Our quality**

The quality of our research is widely recognised, from local businesses and international organisations, to government departments. This is because it focuses on relevant and challenging issues of our time. Our research is designed to be both of high theoretical value, but also applicable to policy and practice.

**Our storytelling**

We disseminate our research widely in leading international journals and conferences as well as practitioner publications, recognising that for our research to make a difference it needs to reach the people who can be influenced by its findings. Importantly, we also engage with business and policymakers in the formulation of our research to ensure that the questions we address are relevant and timely.

**Our training**

Training and developing the next generation of researchers is also an important part of our activities. Our research informs our teaching at undergraduate, postgraduate and executive levels. We also have a thriving PhD programme, which is supported by the North East Doctoral Training Centre (NEDTC) – in collaboration between the universities of Durham and Newcastle – as well as our extensive in-house doctoral training. PhD students are very much a part of our vibrant research community and are members of research groups.

**Our outreach**

Our research groups have international links and collaborative partnerships, ensuring that our research has worldwide influence and relevance – in the tradition...
of a world-class civic university. We conduct research activity within a number of research groups and centres. Each of these sit within four key subject areas:

- Centre for Knowledge, Innovation, Technology and Enterprise (KITE)
- Applied Econometrics (AE)
- Accounting, Governance and Accountability (AGA)
- Applied and Theoretical Economics (ATM)
- Business, Accounting and Management History (BAMH)
- Behavioural Research in Finance (BRiF)
- Economics of Safety, Health, Environment and Risk (ESHER)
- Finance, Accounting, Control & Evaluation (FACE)
- Gender, Professions and Society (GPS)
- Macroeconomic Analysis & Applications (MAnA)
- Multidisciplinary Applied Research in Organisational Excellence (MAROE)
- Professions, Work and Organisation (PWO)
- Services Marketing
- Strategy, Organizations and Society (SOS)

The following is a selection of NUBS research projects that demonstrate research underpinning our commitment to the PRME principles:

Businesses not wasting time on waste

Tailored ‘bite size’ Lean management research developed by an academic team at Newcastle University Business School has yielded results on the factory floor for small and medium sized businesses across six European countries. The research driven by Professor Christian Hicks, Dr Tom McGovern, Dr Adrian Small, Dr Colin Herron and Paul Braiden has also delivered an infrastructure legacy for the countries in the form of Innovative Productivity Centres (IPCs) created to spread Lean best practice.

The team’s initial research into the effectiveness of applying Lean management practices into North East England SMEs formed the foundation for a major European project to embed Lean best practice into small companies across the UK, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, Germany and the Netherlands. Lean production was developed in the automotive sector and has been adopted more widely by industry to boost competitiveness through minimising waste and synchronising processes. The NUBS researchers discovered many SMEs in the North East found it difficult to implement the principles into their manufacturing processes as Lean literature failed to take into account factors such as the size of a business and resource constraints.

The academics tackled this problem through innovative excellence - significantly helping companies improve their competitiveness through enhanced Lean/agile supply and operations strategy. The team developed a new diagnostic tool to help direct Lean interventions. By adding a stage to the Lean process, such as the
identification of needs, the existing Lean model was implemented in smaller firms more successfully. The tool comprises needs analyses in productivity, manufacturing and training. The three-stage process matches appropriate tools and measures with company manufacturing problems.

This allows firms to best target their resources at the most important productivity problems. Their research saw the Newcastle team lead the major European Regions for Innovative Productivity (ERIP) project to support the transfer of Lean processes into small businesses across the North Sea region. The objective was to build on the Newcastle research base and develop a methodology for the North Sea region, analysing data from 25 companies. Lean competencies within each of the countries were strengthened by staging transnational showcase events where businesses shared and transferred knowledge, with 236 people undertaking transnational training.

The project’s legacy is the establishment of six new IPCs. They comprise a university, an exemplar company and a regional development agency to facilitate the development and spread of Lean knowledge and the ERIP methodology in partner countries. Project participant Newcastle-based Peacocks Medical Group has supplied medical equipment and services for over 100 years, employing 170 people. “The development of a bite-size Lean approach was more appropriate for our organisation as it allowed us to meet our operational commitments as well as engaging with the ERIP project,” said Peacock’s Production Manager.

The Manager of Noordelijke ProductiviteitsAlliantie, the foreign direct investment agency which drives the ERIP project in the Netherlands, said: “We initially started with four SMEs involved in the ERIP project, but this has grown and we currently work with 34 companies.”

A final ERIP project conference was held in Newcastle where partners revealed their findings. Impact at companies participating in the ERIP project included:

- Peacocks which estimated it reduced waste by 25% through improving materials requisition and improved floor space utilisation by 15%
- German printing firm L-Druck reduced the lead time of a quotation process from 16 hours to one hour – an annual cost saving of more than 140,000 Euros
- Swedish Falk Graphic Media – a printing and graphic production firm – reduced long set up times and down time by tackling incomplete orders and unclear quality levels.
- Noca, a Norwegian printed circuit boards and electronic products manufacturer, improved its visual management as part of ERIP project participation
- A Belgium-based SME enjoyed a productivity increase of 32% in value-added per person and a 20% increase in stock turns, while another Belgian company had a 52% increase in productivity

**Volkswagen Group: the Evolution of a Scandal**

Professor Stewart Clegg, uses the Volkswagen Group emissions scandal as a case study in his work on codifying the way in which organisations respond to unexpected events. The Volkswagen Group emissions scandal in 2015 affected an estimated 11
million cars worldwide. It may have irreparably damaged the reputation of one of the world’s biggest and well-known car manufacturers. But what can other organisations learn from Volkswagen’s experience?

The story is well known. On the 18 September 2015 the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) issued a Notice of Violation of the Clean Air Act to German car manufacturer Volkswagen Group. The Notice was triggered by an experiment done by scientists at West Virginia University, who carried out road tests on two VWs and a BMW X5 as part of testing for the International Council on Clean Transportation. They found that nitrogen oxide (NOx) emissions recorded in the VWs were 40 times higher than in previously posted laboratory test results. This difference was because the VWs were fitted with a device that changed the cars’ performance under test conditions to ensure the US standards on NOx emissions were met.

The outcome for Volkswagen Group was disastrous. After the news broke, its share price plummeted by a third. The Group’s CEO resigned and other members of top management, including Volkswagen Research & Development chief Heinz-Jakob Neusser, Audi R&D chief Ulrich Hackenberg and Porsche R&D chief Wolfgang Hatz, were suspended. Although the firm had spent a year arguing that the discrepancies found in other tests were technical glitches, when confronted by the EPA it backed down and changed its rhetoric.

Three days after the scandal broke, Volkswagen Group announced plans to spend $7.3 billion on rectifying the emissions issue and refit affected vehicles as part of a recall campaign. Although four months later, in January 2016, it continued to maintain that the issue was the result of bad behaviour by individual actors not systemic problems.

The company’s initial response appears to have been based on a strategy of “toughing it out and not acknowledging liability”, according to Professor Stewart Clegg. He uses the scandal as a case study in his work on codifying the way in which organisations respond to unexpected events. However, faced with irrefutable proof and global news headlines, Volkswagen Group’s strategy changed.

**Rewriting the scandal**

External factors also contributed to the development of the scandal, including the general public shaping the discourse around events. Professor Clegg notes that the Wikipedia article on the scandal received almost 1120 edits by more than 300 contributors in its first two months. The rewriting of the scandal and the language in which it is described is evidence of how easily understanding of a factual, historical event can be changed by the perceptions and opinions of ordinary people.

Other companies have also contributed to the rewriting of the scandal. Bosch, the car parts manufacturer that provided the software enabling cars to cheat the emissions tests, has revealed it advised Volkswagen Group’s management in 2007 that the software was designed only for testing vehicles’ performances and should not be included in all vehicles, and warned about the potential fraudulent use of the software.

Professor Clegg comments: “Given we now know that Bosch warned the company about the potential misuse of this software as far back as 2007, we might conclude
that the management of Volkswagen Group decided to ignore fraudulent use of the software for eight years.” As a result of the good fuel economy and low emissions results produced by the software, the company received green car subsidies and tax exemptions in the US and other countries.

Organisational culture
Professor Clegg’s research also explores the way in which the internal culture shaped the company’s response. Volkswagen Group’s statements that only a small circle of engineers were involved in the fraud and that they kept the secret of the manipulation to themselves are as yet unproved.

Full inquiries will deliver evidence on whether this is a believable scenario but Professor Clegg suggests that it could be the case that senior management were unaware of the reality if there was a company culture that discouraged honest discussion.

French newspaper Le Monde characterised the culture at Volkswagen Group as one of fear and terror, reportedly comparable to the North Korean regime. “This culture of fear”, Professor Clegg explains, “might explain deviant behaviours”. He says the engineers in charge would have known that the objectives of simultaneously reducing gas consumption and emissions while increasing the power of engines were unreachable without significantly modifying the engines. However, this reality may have been excluded from internal discussions at Volkswagen Group if the engineers believed their jobs were at risk. It is therefore possible that those at the very top may not have known what was going on.

Professor Clegg notes that while a culture of fear may have helped Volkswagen Group remain stable while acquiring and restructuring a number of other automakers, namely Audi, Seat and Skoda; it will also have fragmented the group and driven ingenuity underground. “Fear will also have legitimised top management’s ignorance of warnings from outside the system that threatened assigned objectives. This means it would have been difficult for staff to discuss what would have been seen as mutually unreachable objectives. In a culture of fear, exposing the inability to reach objectives would have been a significant event, while cheating the test control would have been considered a non-event for the organisation,” he says.

The Volkswagen Group scandal has entered a new phase in its history, in which evidence will be presented as legal testimony, so Professor Clegg expects further changes to the narrative in the future. In the meantime, it demonstrates the vital need for organisations to be aware of the potential for this kind of event and prepare their response. He says: “Research meant purely for scientific discourse has transformed the reputation of a technically sophisticated and previously trusted car manufacturer. It shows that companies shouldn’t stall and consider business as usual; they cannot assume their brand is strong enough to withstand a scandal of this magnitude. The general public, the press and other organisations will all be asking questions as to who was responsible and what is being done; the quicker a company can respond the better.”
Empty Containers

Empty containers could be costing the shipping industry up to $30 billion a year. Dr Jingxin Dong is intent on solving this problem. The global liner shipping industry is worth an estimated $437 billion. It is thought that around 90% of international trade by volume is transferred by sea. The past few decades have seen rapid growth in the industry. Significant investment has been made, resulting in increased fleet sizes and an increasingly complex system.

One of the main problems resulting from this increased complexity is that of empty containers. The problem, says Dr Jingxin Dong, could be costing the shipping industry up to $30 billion a year. It’s a problem he is intent on solving. Using the application of mathematical and technological solutions to operations management, Dr Dong believes an algorithm he has devised could provide the answer.

Minimising costs and emissions

Currently, once a container reaches its destination, often having travelled great distances such as from Shanghai to Southampton, it is emptied. The containers are then left empty for periods of up to two weeks before being returned to their port of origin, a journey which often takes weeks.

Dr Dong believes that if shipping companies use the algorithm he has devised to better manage container flow, this could not only result in a huge cost saving for the industry but could help reduce the 1000 million tonnes of CO2 emitted annually which results in the shipping industry being responsible for 2.5% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

The industry’s focus is on maximising the profit and customer satisfaction from full containers, but not on minimising the cost and environmental outputs of the empty ones. This is because maximising the routes of the laden containers has a direct impact on customer service levels, as the shipments take less time and therefore cost the customer less. There is little consideration of the environmental and economic impact of sending an empty container from Southampton to Shanghai, if it is travelling with valuable full containers.

Sustainable solutions

Research around this issue suggests there are a number of key assumptions which must be considered before a solution to the problem can be found. These include the assumption that:

- shipping vessels follow fixed routes and schedules which cannot be changed
- decisions about unloading empty vessels are made when the vessel arrives at the port or when they are loaded onto the vessel

There are therefore two solutions which could be used by shipping companies to determine the best course of action for the company’s empty containers, both from a cost and a sustainability perspective. Firstly, a shipping company could change its routes according to consumer demands. Secondly, a company could consider the dynamic distribution of laden containers across its shipping routes.
The first solution would improve the existing shipping routes by determining the shortest path to be taken by liner ships. This is known as the two-stage shortest-path based integer programming solution method. This solution could be used at the planning stage and links together two customer service demands to enable ships to make the shortest journeys possible. However, to use this model efficiently the routes would have to be programmed on a daily basis and therefore from an operations perspective this is not the most time and cost effective solution.

The second solution, which is provided by Dr Dong’s research, is for shipping companies to apply an optimisation algorithm to tackle large scale planning problems. This solution is called the heuristic-rules based method and considers a much greater range of variables than just the convenience to customers. Whereas the first solution is only concerned with making changes to the physical route based on customer demands, the second solution is concerned with assigning the laden containers over the shipping network dynamically according to route plans. The first solution also only allows decisions to be made based on the full containers and not on empty container repositioning.

This enables the shipping company to devise the most economical and sustainable routes. According to Dr Dong’s models, it could also result in an overall improvement in the performance of large scale shipping operations of 89.3% on average, and a cost reduction of between 5% and 10%. This algorithm also considers the use of other methods of transportation such as rail to move the empty container to where it is most needed if more appropriate.

The algorithm is currently a one size fits all solution. Dr Dong hopes to work with shipping companies to tailor it to their specific needs. Dr Dong would use the algorithm to create a computer programme, enabling individual shipping companies to manage their operations to the greatest efficiency. By applying the algorithm in this way, Dr Dong hopes that the industry could save billions of dollars and reduce its emissions, which are predicted to increase by between 50% and 250% by 2050. This would help the industry to become more profitable and more sustainable.

The fragilities of Social Enterprise in Chile

Academics at Newcastle University Business School are taking on the global challenge of helping emerging markets to build a sustainable future. Their work, which also explores the contexts and conditions in which these enterprises thrive, was motivated by the excitement and Popularity surrounding social entrepreneurship in Chile. There have been growing calls for the creation of start-ups that put social values at the heart of their operation, values that can deliver tangible benefits to local communities and improve the quality of lives of the people who live there.

Dr Kimmitt and Dr Muñoz produced a study – The Structure and Dynamics of Social Entrepreneurship in Chile – to examine the Efficiency of current frameworks for social enterprises and their ability to create value and adapt to challenges. They analysed the practices, attitudes and aptitudes of 340 social entrepreneurs across Chile, and through the research discovered several key findings. The study revealed that social enterprises in Chile are generally set up to solve more than one problem. This poses a challenge in that...
it demands understanding of the various social issues which shape the context these enterprises work in, which in turn makes it more difficult to balance the numerous demands that they face.

Another relevant finding is that much of the work benefits clients in locations outside of Santiago. While some enterprises deploy staff to work in these locations, only 3.8% of those surveyed moved their main operating base outside of the capital. This indicates that social entrepreneurs tend to launch and develop their ventures in the same place, whereas the problems they’re trying to solve are often based hundreds of miles away and are inextricably linked to circumstances affecting that particular area. Dr Kimmitt says: “Santiago is the metropolitan capital and is different culturally, socially and economically to other areas of the country. Lots of social problems are located outside of the capital but the enterprises need to be based there because that’s where the resources are. “They might also be simultaneously trying to resolve a completely different set of problems in another area with a different demographic and culture. This shows that they can’t just replicate a certain way of working across numerous towns and cities; a one-size-fits-all policy won’t necessarily work. It’s not possible to make generalisations or universal rules that can be replicated in other contexts. This makes the challenges of being a social enterprise somewhat different to a commercial enterprise.

“There’s a lot of hype surrounding social enterprises in Chile but limited information about what’s going on in the sector and what impact it has on society. That’s the issue we want to address.” The study also looked at the impact of social enterprises on job creation and job satisfaction. Three quarters of those surveyed had fewer than six staff, suggesting that their ability to generate mass employment was limited. While job satisfaction was high (64% of enterprises claimed to be “very satisfied” with the commitment of their staff), attracting and retaining labour was cited as a common problem.

“Our research indicates that Chile needs a new business model for social enterprises, one that’s capable of generating greater financial and social value, and that also rewards employees based on higher involvement of employees and volunteers,” says Dr Kimmitt. “Working in the private sector is currently more appealing to staff despite many social enterprises offering good working conditions and benefits.”

Another factor that appears to be holding back the development of Chile’s social enterprise sector is a lack of skills. Only 55% of survey respondents had been given formal training on social entrepreneurship and just 27% on environmental management. Nearly one half (47%) identified the for-profit sector as competition, forcing many enterprises to lower prices which made them less attractive to traditional investors, while funding options post-start-up stage fell dramatically. The research revealed that only 18% received investment after two years in operation.

“This highlights the need for a more sophisticated market structure that draws in a wider range of intermediaries and investment tools,” says Dr Kimmitt. “This structure
could include a business model that attracts funding based on the social impact of the enterprise. “The problem is that many of these enterprises don’t have any mechanism to measure this impact. They’re not capturing key data, such as how many people have got a job or found a home as a result of their work.

“Our research has highlighted a lack of understanding and clarity regarding which measurement tools are out there and how to use them. Even enterprises that are aware of existing tools may not have the expertise to properly evaluate their effectiveness or the resources to implement evaluations.”

Dr Kimmitt believes that policymakers could use the research as a basis for gaining a better understanding of the market and the frameworks needed to help social enterprises in the future. “If anything, it may have opened their eyes to the fragility of the sector,” he says. “Greater partnership-working is certainly needed. In Chile, the public and private sectors tend to operate in silo. It’s different in the UK, where companies are often drafted in to deliver services for the NHS and other public organisations. “If social enterprises in Chile are to have a bigger impact, they need to secure more income. Working closely with the public sector may enable them to achieve this.”

Dr Kimmitt specialises in the study of social entrepreneurship and its impact on international communities. Previously, he worked on a research project that looked at the role of microfinance in stimulating entrepreneurial activity in Ghana.

Sustainability and Inequality

Sustainability and equality are hot topics in global policy. A recent Oxfam report found that the world’s 62 richest individuals are as wealthy as half the global population; while the recently established UN Sustainable Development Goals are set to take over where the Millennium Development Goals left off in tackling some of the biggest challenges facing global society.

The rise of events such as the World Economic Forum (WEF) and the World Social Forum (WSF) has led to an increase in global discussions around these issues, but also to a challenge in the way global actors respond to sustainability and equality. The way world leaders act at these forums determines how sustainability and equality are viewed at a global level. The views held by those who speak on the global stage trickle down into how the general population view these issues - a select group of individuals are able to define how the world works (or responds to sustainability and equality issues). The fact that these global actors can shape the world view means that it is essential to recognise how they understand and act to improve sustainability and equality: what shapes the views these individual actors share in global forums? And how effective are they at influencing policy?
Shaping policy

It is these questions that Dr Victoria Pagan sought to answer through her research. Dr Pagan interviewed global actors at both the WEF and the WSF whose job it is to shape sustainability and equality policy. This included key representatives in large corporations, civil society and politicians. Through discussions Dr Pagan hoped to gain a better understanding of how certain individual’s behaviours can affect the interests of millions of people around the world.

Dr Pagan’s research found that a strong influencer on how an individual acts at such world forums is their own views on and experience of sustainability and equality, alongside their company’s or organisation’s policies. Dr Pagan comments that “There is now an acknowledgment by big businesses and countries that sustainability must be at the heart of their development but there are big differences in what this may look like in practice. There is often a wellfounded perception by the general public that states or corporations are merely paying lip service to general aims like those set out in the sustainability goals.”

Why the WEF and the WSF are essential

The individuals responsible for implementing sustainability or equality policy have a sense of self-belief that what they are doing is the right thing. However, Dr Pagan states: “There is often a conflict between what these individuals believe is the right thing to do and addressing global concerns in practice. This is why forums such as the WEF and the WSF are essential, as they permit individuals from around the world to argue from their own perspectives, and for confrontation to exist.”

Dr Pagan believes that recognition of forums such as the WEF and WSF as places where: “Multiple viewpoints from around the world will facilitate a more far-reaching depiction of the current global situation with regards to inequality and sustainability than homogenous voices.” And this is evident at a recent WSF meeting in Tunisia where key USA and Canadian representatives, versed in the issues of fracking, shared their experiences with other global actors faced with increased fracking activities in their home countries. They exchanged views on the conflict between environmental and economic interests within a sustainability framework. One attendee commented: “I think that’s a very, very valuable piece and facet of the Social Forum process, is that learning across geographies, across continents and across sectors.”

The WEF and the WSF have allowed for greater discussion on the topics of sustainability and equality. Through the inclusion of differing perspectives and opinions from around the world, the members of the Forums’ confrontations and arguments could lead to the best outcomes and ultimately, the best policy decisions to improve sustainability and equality across the world.
Project Management

Sustainability has acquired a growing importance in recent years, becoming central to both the political and economic agenda.

With the establishment of the 17 initiatives known as the Sustainable Development Goals at the Sustainable Innovation Forum in 2015, dubbed COP21, the spotlight is very much on countries and corporations doing their bit on sustainability. However, while much emphasis has been placed on larger issues such as climate change, holes in the ozone layer and the consumption of fossil fuels, there has been much less emphasis on more practical concerns. These include the role of professional and knowledge workers who are essential for building a sustainable economy at ground level. It is this level of sustainability that Dr Luca Sabini aims to explore in a new research project, funded through the Marie Skodowska-Curie actions - Research Fellowship Programme. This grant is awarded by the European Union to support excellent research across all disciplines.

It also seeks to break down the barriers between academia and other sectors and promote the contribution of academic research to empirical policy and business decisions. It is this which most appealed to Dr Sabini, who is currently researching the role of the project management profession in developing a sustainable economy. He hopes that by working with the Professional Association of Project Managers, his research into why and how project managers are responsible for ensuring the sustainability of their projects will result in a best practice framework for businesses.

Horizon 2020 innovation programme

The Marie Curie Fellowship is governed by the framework established in the Horizon 2020 innovation programme. Horizon 2020 is the largest ever EU Research and Innovation programme with nearly €80 billion of funding available from 2014-2020). The framework aims to secure Europe’s global competitiveness through nine work programmes: excellent science; industrial leadership; societal challenges; spreading excellence and widening participation; science with and for society; cross-cutting activities; fast track to innovation; European Institute of Innovation and Technology; and Euratom.

Dr Sabini’s research fits within the societal challenge programme of the Horizon 2020 framework, and is particularly focused on how to develop inclusive, innovative and reflective societies. In his research into the role of project managers and sustainability he will explore how societal wellbeing is generated and sustained over time. Dr Sabini applied to do his research in the UK so his findings could be applied elsewhere: “Besides the US, this is the country where project management is the most established and advanced, so lessons learnt here can help other countries where the profession is still in the early stages of development.”

He hopes that his research will contribute to the understanding of the importance of professionals such as project managers in improving sustainability. Although
there have been previous studies which highlight the important role project managers play, there has been very little research which addresses how they ensure their projects are sustainable. Dr Sabini comments: “As sustainability becomes more integrated at an individual project level, project managers are developing a number of new methodologies, tools and techniques in order to ensure that sustainability is integrated at all points of the project’s development.”

**Development of the new Urban Sciences building at Newcastle University**

One example that Dr Sabini will be examining in his research is the development of the new Urban Sciences Building at Newcastle University. This building had a sustainability framework built in from the very earliest planning stages and includes plans for the reduction of energy, water and waste, and the monitoring of pollutants from the construction process to the day-to-day running of the building. Dr Sabini’s findings will be theoretical in terms of understanding the institutionalisation of sustainability within project management practices. But they will also be practical in terms of ensuring the implementation of projects will benefit wider stakeholders. This will include the businesses to which he will provide a best practice framework, the communities who will benefit from the research and the policymakers who can learn from the examples of best practice grassroots sustainability when developing new policies and legislation.

Though the introduction of the sustainable development goals at COP21 has reinforced sustainability as a prominent overarching theme for governments and corporations, there is still very little guidance on how it should be integrated at a grassroots business level. Through examining the role of project managers, Dr Sabini aims to ensure the integration of sustainability into individual projects in order to develop a more sustainable society and economy.

**How firms can learn from the BP oil spill**

A fascinating study has highlighted how companies can learn from one of the worst environmental disasters in US history. Dr Simon Parry, Lecturer in Accounting and Entrepreneurship Newcastle University Business School.

Eleven people lost their lives and several more were injured when BP’s Deepwater Horizon drilling rig in the Gulf of Mexico exploded in April 2010, causing an oil spill that also killed marine life and destroyed beaches, wetlands and estuaries for miles around. It was also arguably the most high-profile corporate crisis in recent times, with numerous public investigations launched to establish the cause of the spill and politicians – including the then US President Barack Obama – wading into a media debate that lasted several years.

Finally, in 2015, BP agreed to pay billions of pounds in fines to settle legal claims, but by then its corporate reputation had taken a significant knock. The disaster highlighted BP’s handling of the situation and thrust the issue of crisis communications firmly into the spotlight. It also paved the way for an in-depth study.
that could eventually have a big bearing on the way companies react to unexpected crises.

Dr Simon Parry, looked at the main protagonists’ responses to the Deepwater Horizon crisis and analysed their strategies for dealing with it. He also looked at these strategies in line with existing academic theories on corporate crisis communications. His conclusion was that existing models are not sophisticated enough to help companies deal with crises as complex as the BP oil spill – suggesting further research into the issue is required. Dr Parry says: “Previous interpretations are overly simplistic. They assume that to deal with a crisis a company will adopt one particular strategy, such as denial, which is a useful way of diverting responsibility to another party.

“However, if you look at BP’s response to the Deepwater Horizon crisis it’s much more complex than that. The company pursued a strategy dominated by compassion and ingratiation, intermixed with carefully used denial to share the blame. This form of blame sharing is a hybrid of denial and acceptance. “In effect, BP accepted a limited level of blame but made it clear that there were other parties involved. The company accepted some responsibility but argued that others were responsible too.”

The other main parties involved in the crisis were deepwater drilling contractors, Transocean and Halliburton, two of the world’s largest providers of products and services to the energy industry. Dr Parry’s research showed that both companies adopted a strategy of distancing and counterattack to shift blame away from them – in stark contrast to the strategy adopted by BP.

Along with Matthew Bamber, an academic from the University of Bristol, he analysed the tone and content of the press releases issued by the three companies in response to the crisis and found that the tone became significantly more aggressive
as the situation developed towards its legal conclusion. Their responses also highlighted how corporate communication can shift in emphasis depending on the situation at a given point in time. BP’s use of denial, for example, can only be understood in the context of the company’s strategy of blame shifting and blame sharing as time went on. “It’s fair to say that BP started from the unenviable position of being forced to publicly concede organisational responsibility for an apparently preventable tragedy,” Dr Parry says. “From that moment forward, achieving absolution from guilt would have been impossible. Within the organisation, however, there would have been a strong social, political and economic desire to share some of the blame. It was in BP’s best interests to make certain that the names of the other potentially responsible parties were never far from the public (and legal) eye. Equally, the secondary actors in the drama, Transocean and Halliburton, must have been aware that any association with the tragedy could be extremely damaging.”

Dr Parry’s study has provided a solid foundation for further research into corporate crisis communication strategies – particularly the way in which companies use denial as a primary response. “Deepwater Horizon highlights the complexity of the modern business world and the need for companies of all sizes to have a crisis communication plan in place,” he says. “A lot of small companies outsource to third parties because they have not got the capacity or expertise to carry out the work themselves.

“A building firm, for example, may subcontract electrical work to another company, but if the house burns down due to an electrical fault, who is most to blame? While crises are rarely on the same scale as Deepwater Horizon, they can affect even the smallest of companies.” Dr Parry’s research highlighted the multiple reasons why crisis response is an area worthy of separate attention. Crises create a public thirst for information and a pressure on media outlets to satisfy it; therefore, coverage of crises has become progressively more sensationalist, partly due to increased availability of information in the digital age and partly because of the economic pressure brought about by increased competition in industry.

“The public is increasingly aware of, and interested in, crisis events regardless of their origin, nature, or scope,” he said. “Therefore, the threat to an organisation’s reputational assets when found guilty of involvement – or even being associated with the crisis – has also intensified.” This scrutiny is difficult for companies to deal with, especially in a crisis as complex as Deepwater Horizon. As Dr Parry has demonstrated, previous response frameworks of “apology versus denial” are insufficient to explain the intricacies of crises which morph into complex beasts over a long period of time. “That’s not to say that existing frameworks are no use,” he said. “It’s just that the advice offered is pretty binary: admit culpability or blame others. There are various other factors that need to be considered.

“Does the company in question have control over the situation? Are there environmental factors beyond anyone’s control? What level of damage has been caused and does this level increase or decrease over time? “The previous record of the company also has to be taken into account. If its reputation has already been damaged by previous crises, particularly if they have occurred in the recent past,
people may be quicker to judge the company this time around even if no blame should be attached."

While blame shifting and denial are two key strategies to head off a crisis, they can also determine the sustainability of the company in question. If the company gets its strategy wrong, it could face litigation and associated financial costs that could put its entire business in jeopardy. “While BP had the financial muscle to settle its legal claims, smaller firms may not be so lucky,” says Dr Parry. “The ability to communicate effectively in a crisis can save a company from financial ruin and ensure that it’s a sustainable entity in the long run.”

Sustainability is a key area of expertise at Newcastle University Business School, where academics explore a wide range of issues that help to provide practical solutions to real-world challenges, diverting a significant proportion of funds towards this type of research, with the aim of helping society make positive changes that improve the quality of life for communities across the world.

Sugar Tax Could Help In Fight Against Obesity

For several years, successive UK governments have championed the drive to fight obesity by encouraging people to exercise and enjoy a healthier diet.

Dr Melanie Parravano, Lecturer in Economics Newcastle University Business School. Despite this campaigning, however, the problem still exists but new research from Newcastle University Business School has unearthed a potential solution that could benefit citizens in countries across the globe.

A study carried out by experts from Newcastle, York and Anglia Ruskin universities examined the impact of a 20% and 40% tax on unhealthy cereals and soft drinks containing sugar. It also investigated whether or not telling people they were being taxed influenced their shopping habits. One thousand people in the UK took part in the study and were given a budget of £10 to spend on soft drinks and cereals. Some of the participants were made aware of the tax, others weren’t. They were asked to complete 10 shopping tasks on a supermarket website – five tasks to buy cereals and the other five to purchase sugar-sweetened drinks.

The goods were split into two categories, “healthier” and “less healthy”, with the research team basing the criteria on a scoring system used by Ofcom to enforce restrictions of television advertising to children. The system looks at the nutritional content of 100g of a food or drink and includes data on energy density, saturated fat, total sugar, sodium and protein, along with an estimate of the volume of fruit, vegetable and nut contents. The novel experiment undertaken by the universities – and funded by the Department of Health and Policy Research – revealed some striking results.
A 20% sugar tax discouraged shoppers from buying unhealthier breakfast cereals but not sugar sweetened beverages, while a 40% tax was effective at reducing purchases of both types of product. In addition, if shoppers knew they were being taxed by 20%, purchases of the less healthy goods fell by around one half. Effectively, this indicates that a levy on food and drink radically changes shoppers' buying habits. Dr Melanie Parravano, at Newcastle University Business School, was heavily involved in the project and said it could help ministers shape future policy on food and drink taxation. She says: “I was really interested in the opportunity to carry out research that has an impact on such an important global issue. It’s a topic that’s extremely relevant, not just in the UK but also in other developed or developing countries.

“In the UK, the government plans to introduce a sugar levy on fizzy drinks in 2018, although our research shows that it could also be applied to other products. There’s also an argument for letting shoppers know how much they are being taxed. Our experiment showed that a significant number of people who knew about the tax decided not to purchase the products. Effectively, making them aware of the tax had a marked effect on their shopping behaviour.”

The findings add to those in a report by Public Health England, published in 2015, which considered a tax or levy of 10–20% on high sugar products. They also follow on from a 10% tax on sugary drinks in Mexico, which led to a 6% annual fall in sales of this type of product. Dr Parravano says: “Our research shows that governments across the world need to educate shoppers more by making it clear which food and drink products are taxed. Signposting people in this way is easy to do and relatively inexpensive. “If we can find ways of changing shoppers’ attitudes and buying habits, we might be able to start finding a solution to the weighty problem of obesity. This will reduce the strain on public health services and enable people to lead healthier, more fulfilling lives.”

Dr Parravano worked on the study with several academics including Professor Daniel Zizzo at Newcastle University Business School. Also involved were Professor Marc Suhrcke and Dr Ryota Nakamura at Hitotsubashi University, and Dr Suzanna Forwood at Anglia Ruskin University. Their research paper, “The Impact of Taxation and Signposting on Diet: An Online Field Study with Breakfast Cereals and Soft Drinks”, has been published by the University of York’s Centre for Health Economics.

From Farm to Fork

An EU funded project, led by the Business School's Professor Matthew Gorton, aims to increase the effectiveness of EU agricultural food policy. Food has become a much-talked-about subject in recent years. The public is more aware of the provenance of what they eat, the quality of food and the process which it goes through, from farm to fork. Alongside this, however, sits a plethora of problems:
• growing obesity
• increasing food waste
• unfair trading practices between suppliers and retailers

A recent report by the European Commission in particular noted that more still needed to be done by some Member States about unbalanced trading between certain businesses within the food supply chain. It fell short of recommending greater legislative measures, but the common view is that more still needs to be done.

Food supply chains

Much research has been done into the social, economic, nutritional and environmental impacts of food supply chains. To date, very little of the research has quantified or assessed the impact different types of food supply chains have on a community. A team from Newcastle University Business School, led by Professor Matthew Gorton, aims to address this void. They recently secured funding from the European Union to carry out a five-year research project called Strength2Food. With 6.9 million Euros of funding behind the project, it aims to look at ways of increasing the effectiveness of EU agricultural food policy.

Professor Gorton explains: “Over the next five years, we will be carrying out research across the EU and beyond which will look at a number of different issues associated with short food supply chains, procurement, and improving the way agricultural policy is applied within a variety of Member States. “We hope to identify examples of good practice which can be shared and applied elsewhere. But we also want to understand why certain practices might not work in certain economies, particularly those more disadvantaged, such as some of the newer Member States, and how we can overcome these barriers.”

Partners and stakeholders

The Strength2Food project brings together a total of 30 partners, including:

• 13 European academic organisations
• teams in Vietnam and Thailand, as both countries are looking at ways to improve their own food supply chain systems
• three communications and training firms

In addition, there are 12 national and international stakeholders, ranging from Italy’s largest farmers’ co-operative, a grocery retailer and producer groups, through to NGOs and a local authority. “It was really important that we had a mixture of both academic and non-academic partners involved throughout the whole process of our research so that we can ensure all aspects of the supply chain are covered,” comments Professor Gorton.

Pilot projects

Much of the research will be carried out through six pilot projects which will look at different aspects of supply chain and food procurement practice. These include:
• evaluating producer co-operatives and local labels and considering why some work well when others do not
• provision of school meals in Serbia
• the role of farmers’ markets and food fairs
• food quality schemes in Poland

One pilot that will be of particular interest to Newcastle University Business School is that of the fish quay at North Shields in Tyne and Wear. Professor Gorton explains: “The fish quay at North Shields is one of the largest in the UK, yet most of the produce that comes through it at present is exported – for example, langoustines go to France and Spain. We hope that the pilot we are undertaking here in conjunction with Food Nation, a local social enterprise, will enable us to develop a short supply chain where much of the produce is used in restaurants in and around Newcastle instead of going overseas.”

There is clearly huge benefit from developing such strategies. Encouraging the adoption of short supply chains reduces the environmental impact of transporting produce; ensures it is fresher; and means consumers have a much sounder knowledge of provenance. With all the pilot projects it is hoped that the research will provide evidence of best practice that can be used more broadly across the EU in food policy. But crucial to the success of this, and therefore at the heart of the Strength2Food project, is fully understanding local supply and demand, and how implementation can be managed in different societies.

Professor Gorton cautions about applying a one-size-fits-all approach: “There are huge variations across EU Member States in terms of their economies, lifestyles and approaches to food supply. For example, many producer co-operatives in Italy and France work exceptionally well. If you take Parma Ham, the manufacturers work together co-operatively to ensure the supply chain to retailers is effective and profitable for them. The same is also true of Champagne in France. "However, when similar schemes have been tried in the past in some of the newer Member States, these have not worked so well. There has been no added value for the producers and they simply end up with a registered label and little else. We want to look at why that is, and what can done to change it.”

Within the EU there are certain countries that manage their supply chain and procurement practices extremely well, with producers and retailers working effectively and fairly together. As the recent European Commission report showed, however, this is not widespread. It is hoped that the Strength2Food project will ensure a more detailed and comprehensive understanding of what does and doesn’t work; how best practice can be successfully replicated; and ultimately how better functioning of short supply chains and food procurement in all parts of the EU can ensure that producers, consumers and retailers all benefit.
Women leaders still face barriers to business success

Professor Sharon Mavin, Director of Newcastle University Business School, is leading an innovative research project which highlights invisible-visible challenges faced by women business leaders. Professor Mavin is the lead researcher behind the study, which explores how women leaders are perceived by their peers, other women and how they are characterised by the media. It provides deeper understanding of why there are so few women in top leadership roles.

In her research, Professor Mavin argues that there is a preoccupation with how women leaders look, which takes the focus away from their leadership abilities and aptitudes in the corporate and organisational world. She has developed a theoretical tool called ‘Abject Appearance’ to illustrate the tactics women leaders deploy to manage the situation as they construct their leader identity in a traditionally men-dominated environment.

More than 80 women from a variety of UK-based organisations were interviewed: executive directors or non-executive directors in FTSE 100 or FTSE 250 companies, and elite leaders named in an annual UK regional newspaper supplement that profiled the top 250 influential leaders. Interviews focused on women’s progression into top leadership roles and covered a range of issues, such as their leadership ambitions, competition and cooperation with their peers, and friendships at work.

A key finding from the study is that women in top leader positions felt they were often judged more on their appearance than their competence as business leaders. This may seem insignificant and inconsequential, but it has serious ramifications in how women leaders are normalised (or not) in our society.

Professor Mavin says: “Women told us how distracting this is. Women have to be consciously aware of how they look at all times. The situation is sexist because the same level of continual judgement doesn't apply to men and should be addressed. We are conditioned and socialised that it’s normal to ‘see’ men in positions of power. Gendering women’s appearance is one way of ‘seeing’ women as women – rather than as powerful leaders. “Also, it’s easier for women to get their dress ‘wrong’. A
suit is the professional norm for a man but if a woman wears a similar style, she can be seen as encroaching on masculine territory.

“The situation is exacerbated by the way in which women are portrayed in the media. Some women leaders won’t engage with a journalist if they are questioned about their clothes or family. They don’t want the media messages to be focused on these issues; they are leaders in significant responsible positions, delivering incredible work and want to talk about pertinent business issues – not where they bought their clothes or shoes.”

The study highlights two main strategies that women deploy for dealing with the situation. The first strategy is to shift the focus away from the body and appearance. Some women do this by ‘calling out’ sexism directly, so that the focus is on competence, ability and intellect rather than appearance. Others refuse to engage with media unless there are agreed boundaries around a focus of the business and their organisation.

The second strategy is to keep the focus on appearance but look and dress ‘professionally’. Even this is a difficult balance; anything that reveals ‘too much’ draws attention to the body, while conservative suits and haircuts – such as a Hilary Clinton-style bob and pant suit – are acceptable but get commented on as being boring.

Professor Mavin continues: “Women who adopt this strategy aim to neutralise any discussion about appearance by looking professional ‘enough’ to be taken seriously. Wearing a garish dress, having an unusual haircut or being overweight is viewed as automatically attracting attention for the wrong reasons and undermining women’s credibility for top leader roles.

“The research shows that sexism is still alive and well in the corporate and organisational world – because women don’t wear a suit, shirt and tie. It is time for this gendering through appearance (by men and women) – to stop. It should be called out. If racism isn’t acceptable in football, why does sexism continue in business?

“The study aims to bring this sexism to the surface to encourage business leaders and organisations to consider the impact of, and crack down on, appearance sexism in the workplace. It may also help to effect a change in government policy so that sexist reporting and imagery in the media is banned.”

Professor Mavin recently presented findings from the study to the North East Dynamo Executive Women Leaders in IT programme and has held discussions with key policymakers and the Government Equalities Office about the way in which women business leaders are perceived and portrayed.
Findings from the research project have informed two Government Equalities Office reports on body image and confidence, while she has also been working with colleagues across UK universities on a three-year project, funded by the ESRC, to challenge gender-based misrepresentations of women business leaders and professionals in the media. As part of this Professor Mavin was involved in a roundtable meeting of journalists, academics and business leaders in the House of Commons, where conversations focused on current representations of women in the media, and the challenges and changes needed to portray women in less gendered ways.

Professor Mavin, who has been nominated for a Northern Power Women Award 2018, says: “Inaccurate and gendered media portrayals of women are a wider societal issue, not just a problem in business. These portrayals reinforce stereotypes of how a woman should look and behave and undermine women’s leadership when they don’t live up to perceived gendered norms. “There are wider societal issues with the media’s obsession with women’s bodies and the Government Equalities Office is working to address these. There is evidence to show the negative impact for young women and girls, who assess themselves against media images of how they ‘should’ look; for example, against how celebrities are portrayed. This can lead to lack of self-confidence, and more serious problems including eating disorders or drug and alcohol abuse.

“The impact of the focus on women leaders’ bodies and appearance should not be underestimated – it’s one way of making sure women leaders are still out of place and not normal. This study provides a starting point for challenging this sexism and furthering research that will help to address these vital issues in society.” Sexism is still alive and well in the corporate and organisational world. If racism isn’t acceptable in football, why does sexism continue in business?

**Time to remember the forgotten workers**

Dr Jo McBride, Senior Lecturer in Industrial Relations, Work and Employment

Just over a decade ago, the worst financial crash in living memory put thousands of people out of work, brought big institutions crashing down and wreaked havoc with public finances across the globe. What it also did was spawn a new generation of workers who, several years on, are still struggling to enjoy a decent quality of life despite juggling multiple jobs. The concerns, work-life experiences and challenges these employees face – dubbed the forgotten workers – have been chronicled in a new study by Dr Jo McBride, who has teamed up with fellow academic Dr Andrew Smith, from Bradford University, to explore the key socio-economic and policy issues surrounding low-paid work and multiple employments.

The first study in the UK to focus on low-paid workers in more than one job, it could prove to be a valuable resource for government ministers as they look to form an effective strategy for helping people enjoy a better quality of life. Focusing on
Yorkshire and the North East – two UK regions with high levels of unemployment, poverty and social deprivation – the researchers conducted extensive interviews with low-paid workers in several jobs, as well as with other individuals and organisations such as trade union officials, employers, poverty groups and foodbank organisers.

Ranging in age from their late teens to their sixties, the workers were employed across a wide variety of industries including social services, care, catering, education, retail and the voluntary sector. Their employment contracts included full-time, part-time, temporary, seasonal, casual and zero-hours agreements.

Workers were asked a series of questions about their experience of work, levels of job satisfaction and work-life balance – and the findings highlighted several key trends. Those surveyed had up to seven different jobs at any given time and many said they were struggling to make ends meet, with some using food banks to get by. Many had complex, fragmented and elongated work patterns and had to clock in early in the morning and then during the evenings or at weekends, while some complained of a lack of control with their manager deciding which two days they could take off each week as their ‘weekend’.

As well as having to contend with unsociable working hours and low pay, employees also said they had little job satisfaction despite a strong desire to work hard for their employer. The vast majority did not feel valued by their manager and were frustrated that their opinions weren’t listened to, while some complained of being micro-managed by controlling, inflexible bosses.

Dr McBride says: “Successive governments have told us that employment is the best route out of poverty but that’s not the case for many of these forgotten workers. Around 5.6 million people in Britain are still paid below the pay threshold defined by the Living Wage Foundation as the minimum that people need to live on. Some of the people we spoke to never buy clothes, struggle to buy birthday presents and have not had a break from work for more than 10 years.

“As well as the issue of low pay, many workers are having to compromise their quality of life and well-being just to make ends meet. Some workers are getting up at 4.00am to do their first job and by the time they finish their working day they’re not getting into bed until midnight. Some take annual leave entitlement to take on other jobs just to make ends meet. “Workers on zero-hours contracts are also getting a raw deal. Despite claims that this type of contract offers choice and flexibility, there are major issues with insufficient wages and irregular hours which makes planning ahead very difficult and affects things such as arranging childcare and paying finances that are set each month such as rent. There’s a lack of transparency on how hours and shifts are allocated, and many feel they can’t turn down the offer of extra shifts in case they aren’t asked again.”

Another key finding from the research was the poor work-life balance cited by many respondents. For some, long working days left little time for important family activities, such as picking up the children from school, family meals together and
putting the children to bed. While some employers had a work-life balance policy in place, generally it was available for core staff only. Dr McBride says: “This highlights the complex juggling act that these workers have to undertake on a daily basis. Many have a frenetic daily routine of dashing from job to job and trying to cover domestic and care responsibilities at the same time.”

The study also gives some context into why the lives of forgotten workers are so challenging. It cites previous research from the Trades Union Congress (TUC) which shows that only one in 40 jobs created since the last recession is full-time. It also charts the government’s ongoing austerity policy, which has resulted in public sector cuts, reductions in pay and working hours, and a rise in zero-hours contracts and what is now termed precarious work. Against this backdrop, the study highlights a growing need for the government to form policies that enable workers to have access to a real living wage, rather than market-based minimum wage, with better security so that they can have a better quality of life. The study is sure to be a useful resource for ethical employers who are looking to make improvements to pay and working conditions to attract and retain staff. “There are many beneficiaries of this research,” says Dr McBride. “Trade unions could use it to reinforce their lobbying activities on issues of poverty, low pay and working conditions. Unions face major challenges representing people with more than one job, particularly if each job has a different union recognised. This means that vulnerable workers, such as these people, are potentially left unprotected at some places of work.

“Perhaps our research can bring about a change in legislation so that workers can be assured of decent working conditions, regardless of how many jobs they have. It also fits in with the Workplace 2020 initiative, which aims to generate improvements in working conditions for millions of people across the country. Our study might also be a useful tool for local governments and poverty groups when arguing their case for better public policy on this issue.”

Dr McBride is hosting workshops with regional MPs, several think-tank groups on poverty, regional councils from Yorkshire and the North East, trade unions and poverty organisations to keep these vital issues firmly in the public consciousness. She also wants to compile additional evidence based research that could be useful in future campaigns on workplace rights and social change. Around 5.6 million people in Britain are still paid below the pay threshold defined by the Living Wage Foundation as the minimum that people need to live on.

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• Tyson T, Oldroyd D. Accounting for slavery during the Enlightenment: Contradictions and Interpretations. Accounting History 2017. In Press.
• Davie SSK, McLean T. Accounting, cultural hybridization and colonial globalization: A case of British civilizing mission in Fiji. Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal 2017, 30(4).
• Davie SSK. Accounting, female and male gendering and cultural imperialism. Accounting, Auditing & Accountability Journal 2017, 30(2), Epub ahead of print.


• Fenwick J, Gibbon J. Editorial: Redrawing the boundaries of the third sector and civil society in troubled times. Public Money & Management 2017, 37(2), 75-76.


• Forbes D, Findlay-King L, Macfadyen G, Nichols G. From public to volunteer library provision in the UK: lesson to be learnt – one size does not fit all. Voluntary Sector Review 2017, 8(3), 343-353.


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Chatzopoulou E. The case of Ancient Greek Sandals: can fashion brands benefit if they are linked with an ethnic heritage and celebrity endorsers?. 2017. In Press.


Principle 5 Partnership

We will interact with managers of business corporations to extend our knowledge of their challenges in meeting social and environmental responsibilities and to explore jointly effective approaches to meeting these challenges.

Business School appoints new David Goldman Visiting Professor

Newcastle University Business School has appointed Atom Bank founder and chairman, Anthony Thomson as its new Goldman Visiting Professor. Anthony Thomson, Founder and Chairman of Atom Bank, is an entrepreneurial thinker and uses innovative ways of doing business, making him the ideal candidate for the 2017 professorship.

He will deliver a series of public lectures, while also overseeing a cohort of students from the Business School and its partner institutions: Boston University’s Questrom School of Business; the University of Groningen; and Fudan University through marketing, innovation and financial crime internships at Atom Bank.

Anthony will also work alongside MBA students on an exciting business case competition, where students will be asked to consider global challenges that could affect Atom Bank, and recommend innovative solutions to those issues. This competition will conclude during the MBA’s Business in Action Week, which sees students working with a number of global businesses and putting what they have learned through academia into real world practice. Anthony said: “I was honoured to be invited to become the David Goldman Visiting Professor. Being originally from the North East, I am very proud of the contribution that the region makes to national and global innovation, enterprise and education, and I look forward to helping the business school develop the next generation of innovators and entrepreneurs. “Over the next 12 months, I look forward to building upon the excellent work of my predecessors and – along with my colleagues from Atom Bank – challenging and stimulating the students to help develop their skills, experience and expertise.”

Having set up the UK’s first online only bank, Anthony is no stranger to innovation in enterprise, and his first public lecture for the Business School will be the annual David Goldman Lecture: ‘Innovation, enterprise and a car in a field full of horses’. In addition to the Visiting Professorship, the Goldman endowment funds permanent David Goldman Chair, Savvas Papagiannidis who will work closely with Anthony on a number of research projects. We are anticipating an exciting year ahead where Business School students will be able to work on a number of enterprising and innovative projects. “The endowment has developed in a very positive direction in recent years with appointment of interesting and well experienced David Goldman Visiting Professors.
International research into container supply chains receives £140K grant

This project aims to optimise the entire maritime consumer supply chain through the use of an online decision platform and real-time container tracking data. An innovative international research project that explores collaborative decision making on container supply chains has been awarded a prestigious grant from the UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI).

The partnership between Newcastle University Business School and the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IITD) looks to develop a web-based support platform which will coordinate decision-making between partners in maritime container supply chains using real-time container tracking data. The project, which has been awarded £144,330 from the UKIERI, will provide a new model for shipping service provision that will enable stakeholders to improve the utilisation of ships, helping to increase their competiveness and reduce CO2 emissions. Led by Dr Jingxin Dong and Professor Chris Hicks of Newcastle University Business School, along with Professor Ravi Shankar of IITD, the research will look at ways to improve the efficiency of the container shipping system, and help the industry cut down operational costs, greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption.

Professor Chris Hicks, Deputy Director and Professor of Operations Management at the Business School, said: “Container shipping plays a very important role in maintaining and improving quality of life as containers carry the majority of consumer goods – everything from clothing and consumer electronics to furniture and automobile parts. While there are already a multitude of research projects into how best to improve maritime container supply chains, they tend to make decisions in an isolated way, and do not consider the conflicting interests of multiple stakeholders involved.

“This project aims to optimise the entire maritime consumer supply chain through the use of an online decision platform and real-time container tracking data.” Newcastle University is committed to ensuring that research carried out helps to address some of today’s key global issues and this project highlights solutions that can be offered to the global challenge of sustainability.
Drone technology could be a lifesaver

Professor Steve Hughes played a key role in a new study that aims to measure the performance of ground and air assets in search and rescue operations, with the ultimate aim of getting the right asset combination to save lives. The Business School teamed up with The Centre for Search Research (TCSR) to conduct an experiment at Northumberland National Park over two days in May, 2017. The aim was to deploy air and ground assets working against the clock to find randomly distributed targets over a two-kilometre area of open moorland.

Air assets including fixed and rotary-wing aircrafts and unmanned aerial vehicles – commonly known as drones – took part in the exercise, while members from the Northumberland National Park Mountain Rescue Team and air scenting dogs searched the area on foot.

‘Exercise Northumberland’ was the first research project to compare the effectiveness of multiple search assets since the Home Office’s ‘O’Donnell’ experiments were published in 1987 and 2008. Since then, significant advances in new technology – such as the development of drones – have taken place; new methods for ground search have been introduced and new approaches to search management have been devised and adopted. Professor Steve Hughes, who led the experiment on behalf of the Business School, says: “A lot has been said about drone technology but we don’t know much about its usefulness in complex search operations. If we can learn more about this technology, we can understand how effectively drones can operate alongside other ground and air assets in different environments. This will allow us to assess the interoperability and effectiveness of different services and technology in saving lives in hazardous conditions.

“The usefulness of drones depends on several factors including the quality of the information it provides and how quickly a human can interpret this information. It may take time to decipher a low-quality image, for example, which will lengthen the time it takes to search for missing people. “The weather also plays a major role in how effective drones can be. During our exercise, had conditions deteriorated any further we probably wouldn’t have been able to continue using the drones. The weather also has an influence on the effectiveness of other airborne assets, such as fixed-wing aircraft. “Ultimately, we wanted to look at a variety of search assets, on the ground and in the air, to see how their combined capabilities can assist search operations for missing people.”

The recent project pioneered by Newcastle University Business School and TCSR provides a useful reference point for agencies across the globe involved in search and rescue operations, although further research is required to analyse the effectiveness of assets deployed in different terrains such as earthquakes, avalanches and at sea.
Professor Hughes says: “Deploying a drone in open moorland is different to using it in a search operation along the coast, for example. The effectiveness of a drone in a coastal setting may vary due to changes in wind speeds or visibility levels. “What we have to do is measure the performance of drones in different situations. This will allow us to understand how best to use them alongside other assets in search operations. “We also a need to develop more efficient lines of communication between the various agencies responsible for search and rescue operations.”

TCSR said the research was an important addition to existing studies on the efficacy of search operation management. Peter Roberts, co-founder at TCSR, says: “The research is ground-breaking in terms of its scope and originality. The collaboration of the various agencies who have participated in and observed the experiment is unique. “We’re looking at new technologies and how, through a better understanding of their operational application, they can be used to help in the search for a missing person. “Drone technology, for example, is useful when used in conjunction with other search assets. It adds something to the search and rescue mission in certain environments. In essence, drones are another tool in the toolbox which trained searchers can use when trying to save lives.”

In a period of funding cuts to public services, increasing frequency of natural or man-made disasters, cost-effective and efficient search and rescue methods, the interoperability of various assets is increasingly. We wanted to look at a variety of search assets, on the ground and in the air, to see how their combined capabilities can assist search operations for missing people.

The research led to an international conference on the future of drones in Search and Rescue which took place in Newcastle. Experts from across the globe gathered in Newcastle today, to take part in an international conference on the future of drones in search and rescue.

The conference welcomed delegates from as far afield as New Zealand and the United States and from a wide range of emergency responder services including: mountain rescue, police, fire and rescue, RAF and coastguard. Led by Northumberland-based The Centre for Search Research and Newcastle University Business School, the conference aimed to: reflect on current thinking and experiences of drone technology; harness insights from the invited guests; and establish how drones can be integrated effectively into complex, multi-agency, search and rescue operations.
Professor Stephen Hughes, Newcastle University Business School, explains: “This conference builds on findings from ‘Exercise Northumberland’, a research project undertaken earlier this year to compare the effectiveness of ground and air assets – including drones - in a search environment. “Our report from ‘Exercise Northumberland’ received a lot of international attention and we’ve built on this to bring together experts from around the world to help us draft a roadmap for future research into the use of drones in search and rescue. This will be taken forward by The Centre for Search Research and Newcastle University.

“Major search and rescue operations which take place during an earthquake or missing person situations, for example, require a large number of agencies to work together in complex circumstances and under tight time constraints. We’re delighted that some of the world’s leading search specialists are joining us to share their experiences in drone use and help us to improve search operations and save more lives.”

The two-day conference will include a keynote speech from Philip Solaris, from X-Craft Enterprises in New Zealand, who will outline how drones were used by emergency responders after Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu, in 2015. Ollie Dismore, Director of Operations, National Police Air Service will discuss the ethics and use of drones in policing while Hugh Dougher, former Regional Chief Ranger for the US National Park Service, will provide an American perspective on drone use in search and rescue. “This research collaboration between The Centre for Search Research and Newcastle University Business School will provide the start of what we hope will be a thorough evaluation of drone capabilities and performance in multi-agency search situations. It will also establish closer links between the University and a voluntary sector of growing importance to search and rescue responses. Ultimately we hope our findings will inform increasingly effective search and rescue operations and save lives”

**Business School sponsors the Young Business Person of the Year Award for 12th year**

“Encouraging entrepreneurship and new business thinking is fundamental to what we do at the Business School.” Dr. Anna Tilba, Director of Business Engagement Businesses need to evolve in order to survive, and it is essential that entrepreneurs of tomorrow are supported to challenge the status quo and drive the future of enterprise and social change.

Recognising how business is shaped by a desire to think differently, Newcastle University Business School’s driving purpose is to push the boundaries of knowledge by facilitating entrepreneurial thinking. We create future business leaders who strive for excellence and are eager for change. This is the 12th consecutive year the Business School has sponsored the Young Business Person of the Year, at the North East Business Executive of the Year awards. Dr. Anna Tilba, Director of Corporate Engagement at Newcastle University Business School said: “Encouraging entrepreneurship and new business thinking is fundamental to what we do at the Business School. “This is why we have been supporting the North East Business Executive of the Year Awards for over a decade. Our sponsorship of the Young Business Person of the Year category is a signal to those we teach, and those in the
regional and national community, that we are proud of our ability to nurture entrepreneurial talent”.

This award is a highlight for the Business School as it gives us the opportunity to see what dynamic entrepreneurs are doing in the region. Dr Tilba was joined by Business School Director, Professor Sharon Mavin, in hosting Alison Shaw from NE Futures, Liz Liddle and Jenny Charteris from Virgin Money, Mick Hogan from Newcastle Falcons, Tony Leech from HSBC, Justin Batson from Barclays, Alison Gittins from Durham Business Group and Charles Penn from Sintons Law.

The winner of the award was Phil Pallister, who is the Managing Director of 0800 Repair Gas Services. 0800 Repair Gas is a leading home service in heating, plumbing and insulation. "Phil was clearly an outstanding candidate. He has overseen the growth and development of this arm of Pacifica from start up, advancing it from only himself and no resources to a national operation. Phil’s ability to build longstanding relationships and partnerships with people working in Heating and Plumpling has paid off as evident from the success of his business.

Beyond his corporate success, Phil also works with North East social housing providers and local authorities, as well as companies, to reduce carbon footprints and implement energy efficient heating."

Captured is the catalyst for business growth

Micro-businesses are crucial to the economy. Government figures show that in 2016, 5.3 million (96%) of UK businesses were micro-businesses – employing 0-9 people. They accounted for 32% of employment and 19% of turnover. Typically, the owner-manager of a micro-business is responsible for the full range of managerial duties and finds it very difficult to take time to identify opportunities to develop their business and hone their leadership and management skills. The All Party Parliamentary Small Business Group and Federation of Small Businesses recognise that larger companies should be encouraged to provide advice, share expertise and offer other forms of support to smaller companies within their supply chain. However, there are few mechanisms to bring large organisations into contact with smaller businesses to develop leadership and management skills.

Dr Fiona Whitehurst, senior lecturer, along with other academics at Newcastle University Business School, recognised that more needed to be done to help small business tap into the expertise from large firms, so they developed the Captured programme. Piloted in 2012 and subsequently funded by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills in 2015 – the project is a participatory research
based programme exploring how anchor institutions, including Business Schools and private sector organisations, can engage with micro-businesses to develop skills for growth.

Senior professionals from large organisations are matched with small company owners to help them develop leadership and management skills that can address productivity issues, transform workplace practices and foster a more entrepreneurial culture within their business. These professionals also get the chance to learn from the way in which a small firm operates.

To date, small businesses have been able to work with some of the region’s largest organisations, such as: Sage, Siemens and GSK. Dr Fiona Whitehurst, who is leading the Captured project, says: “Captured is open to North East businesses with fewer than 20 employees and aims to address issues faced by small firms that tend to underinvest in leadership and management training.

“If we can help business owners to develop their leadership and entrepreneurial skills, they will be able to devise innovative and more profitable ways of growing their business. They may also find new ways of widening their skills base, retaining top graduate talent, making their business more resilient and gaining a better understanding of the supply chain in which they operate.” The programme lasts around two months and is targeted towards micro-businesses. It consists of four half-day workshops, facilitated by Business School staff, with each series of workshops having a cohort of up to eight small firms. For the last three workshops the small firm owner is paired with a manager from a large regional firm.

Early results have been positive as comments from participants indicate: “Having an external perspective has been really useful for me. It has taught me the value of stepping away from the business from time to time. I’m always in there fixing things whereas I need to step back at times and take a fresh look at the business.” Ian Straker, Transmit Start-Ups.

“The programme has given us the chance to get out of the daily routine and think and reflect, both on the efficacy of our business processes and on the skills and experience gained through working in a different environment.” Polly Lerner, GSK’s HR Business Lead.

The Captured team worked with 41 small firms over six cohorts between January and June 2016 and is continuing into 2017 with funding from the Business School and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership. Dr Whitehurst continued: “Captured shows that business schools can act as a catalyst to bring people together to reflect on and develop their management and leadership practices. We’re looking forward to continuing the programme and seeing the participants flourish.”

Through Captured, we explore the ways anchor institutions, such as universities, business schools and large firms, can support the development of small businesses.
“It’s great to have access to Newcastle University Business School and managers from large organisations through the programme. I’d recommend it to other small businesses that are seeking fresh, innovative ways to grow their business.” Debbie McCordall, Accentuate HR.

Professor Sharon Mavin, Director at Newcastle University Business School, said: “Effective leadership is extremely important and the Captured programme will allow us to further develop the skills of small business owners across the region.” “We have a huge number of outstanding small businesses in the North East, and creating collaborations between these organisations and larger companies such as Siemens, Sage, IBM, Home Group, Sevcon and Lloyds Bank can only be beneficial.”

A spokesperson for Siemens said: “Siemens is passionate about helping new businesses to reach their potential. Siemens itself started off as a small engineering business run by two brothers. Today, it’s a global business with more than 400,000 employees. Anything is possible with the right support. We’re delighted to be involved with this project and hope it will help shape the business leaders of the future.”

Captured works on the principle that experienced managers from large organisations can be a valuable resource to small business owners. The programme, which was initially funded by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, is now funded by Newcastle University – with support from the North East Local Enterprise Partnership. Dr Fiona Whitehurst said: “We are playing a vital role in strengthening the entrepreneurial eco-system of the North East by bringing together small and large firms in a learning experience which is mutually beneficial for all parties.”

Captured is made possible through funding from Newcastle University Business School and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership.

**Principle 6 Dialogue**

*We will facilitate and support dialogue and debate among educators, business, government, consumers, media, civil society organizations and other interested groups and stakeholders on critical issues related to global social responsibility and sustainability.*

**Fuse helps businesses get better connected**

The UK is developing a global reputation for its creative talent, which generates billions of pounds each year for the national economy. Creative, digital and IT industries (CDIT) produced £87.4 billion of economic output in 2015 – a figure that’s likely to be even higher now – making this diverse sector one of the fastest-growing trades in the country. Despite the recent growth of this sector and its importance to the UK economy, however, it faces several key challenges which have been outlined in a new report led by Newcastle University Business School with colleagues in Creative Arts, CURDS and Northumbria University.
Creative Fuse North East is an action-research project funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), Arts Council England, and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). The project has received up to £892,638 of funding from the ERDF as part of the European Structural and Investment Funds Growth Programme 2014–20. Creative Fuse North East will run until October 2018.

Creative Fuse North East is a partnership between the region’s five universities, industry specialists, local authorities and arts and culture organisations, which is exploring ways of tackling barriers to growth and capitalising on the rich potential that digital technology offers. It builds on previous work conducted by the Business School’s Professor Jonathan Sapsed on the Brighton Fuse project, which saw private and public sector organisations join forces to discover how technology can boost innovation in the arts, humanities and design sectors.

Professor Sapsed says: “Our latest research could benefit CDIT professionals by highlighting areas where there is untapped potential. It also outlines existing barriers to growth and, in doing so, could help policymakers adapt their strategies to create a trading environment that makes it easier for companies to expand and prosper.”

The Creative Fuse team analysed a wide range of business and employment databases to develop an initial understanding of the North East CDIT sector. A survey was then created and circulated to more than 500 firms and freelancers who work in the industry. Questions focused on how these companies and individuals innovate to generate business, what their common challenges are, and what changes they would like to see to remove barriers to growth. Interviews with business people, artists, and intermediaries who support the CDIT sector were also conducted.

The survey responses revealed some interesting trends. There were high levels of innovation in most of the businesses in the sample, with 93% empowering staff to try new things and 70% providing training for employees in the last 12 months. Many businesses were prepared to test and develop applications of emerging technologies in sectors outside of CDIT. One respondent, for example, capitalised on an opportunity to bring virtual reality into care homes to deliver reminiscence-based experiences to patients; another business used its technology to create 3D interactive digital car configurators for automotive dealerships.

Businesses highlighted the good quality of life in the North East as a major advantage, with affordable office space, a burgeoning art community and the region’s reputation for creativity also cited as key plus points. However, disadvantages included the distance from London, poor access to affordable private finance and the lack of a well-connected transport system.
Professor Sapsed says: “Connectivity is a key issue for businesses in the North East CDIT sector. Some respondents highlighted the prohibitive cost of travelling to the south of the UK; one chief executive said she couldn’t reconcile how a train journey to London is more expensive than a flight to Dubai! Others thought that the transport network wasn’t good enough and they felt a bit isolated in the North East. “Some businesses, particularly those in rural areas, cited poor mobile phone reception and the lack of reliable broadband connectivity as key barriers to growth.

“We need to look at these issues at a policy level to make this region more visible and better connected to people in the south of the country. If this could be achieved, North East based creative and digital firms would have a better chance of growing their business.” Access to skills was also flagged as a major barrier to growth. 30% of businesses said the lack of available talent was a key trading disadvantage, while more than one half of freelancers noted insufficient time and excessive training costs as a hindrance to the development of new skills. This indicates a need for further and higher education institutions to work more closely with businesses to tackle skills shortages.

Businesses were also concerned about Britain’s impending exit from the European Union. While more than one quarter (27%) of firms surveyed said international markets were a source of revenues, some were worried that the loss of labour mobility and EU funding post-Brexit could reduce their chances of capitalising on key European markets. Given these concerns, most companies were keen to build a customer base closer to home, with seven out of 10 viewing the local market as “very or extremely important”. Professor Sapsed says: “The research highlights a need for UK regions to be better connected in the post-Brexit era so they can take advantage of opportunities in the domestic market. Brexit has also forced some companies to look at overseas markets beyond Europe.

“There’s a wider world of opportunities outside of Europe and companies can benefit from working with partners all over the world.” Creative Fuse has shown that there is a significant opportunity to grow the CDIT sector by encouraging the combination of art, design and technology skills among firms and freelancers. A related opportunity is to connect CDIT professionals with other industries. This will facilitate a transfer of skills that will support growth and innovation in key sectors such as manufacturing and healthcare. “Tourism organisations may also be interested in our research. Quality of life and affordability were clearly valued by the survey respondents so there is real potential to promote the North East as a great place for creative professionals. This could help to prevent a brain-drain of talent and persuade people from outside of the region to relocate here.”

In the next phase of Creative Fuse, a series of innovation pilot projects will apply various creative and technical disciplines from the CDIT sector to other markets. One pilot will use technology to help Northumbria Police tackle cybercrime; others will see universities work with small firms and freelancers to address vital social and...
industrial challenges. The key aim of these projects is to support economic growth and find ways of solving real-world problems in society. **Creative Fuse** has shown that there is a significant opportunity to grow the CDIT sector by encouraging the combination of art, design and technology skills among firms and freelancers.

**Innovation in rural enterprise across three continents**

Dr Robert Newbery, senior lecturer in entrepreneurship delivered a session on Innovation in Rural Enterprise at the ‘Building Resilience Capacity of Smallholder Coffee Farmers and their Communities: Innovation across Three Continents’ workshop, in December 2017 at Chiang Mai University. The 3-day long workshop brought together industry experts with international academics to give an interdisciplinary focus to the project. Smallholder coffee farmers from Northern Thailand were united with those from Central America and East Africa to allow for a transfer of best practice strategies between the industries from the three continents. Day two of the event saw a field visit to meet the farmers at Akha Ama village.

Dr Robert Newbery was also keynote speaker at a symposium on Entrepreneurship for University Leaders, in Baku, Azerbaijan; with higher education leaders to discuss impact of higher education on the economic development of the country through developing and supporting entrepreneurship and innovation. Dr Newbery, an experienced expert on Entrepreneurship, led the symposium on “Higher Education and Economic Development: Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Financial Sustainability of Universities”.

**How mobile working ruins work-life balance – unless you’ve got a good manager**

Research by Stefanie Reissner, Newcastle University and Michal Izak, University of Roehampton has explored the effects of mobile working on work-life balance of employees. An increasing number of office workers can now work from any location for at least part of their working week. According to the Work Foundation, 30% of office workers could work from any location for at least part of their working week in 2016. This figure is expected to rise to 70% in the next few years. These are mobile workers. They fulfil their job roles irrespective of whether they are at home, in a corporate or client office, or in public spaces. As long as they have their laptop or tablet, smartphone and, ideally, a
reliable internet connection they can get the job done. In the words of someone we’ve interviewed in our research: my computer is my office.

*Mobile working* – with the flexibility to work where and when convenient – has well-known benefits. It enables people (particularly women) to combine caring responsibilities with paid work, allows them to maintain contact with a workplace, keep up with the latest developments in their profession and contribute to a pension. Mobile working enables people to work from home or a nearby corporate location, thereby reducing their commute time across a working week, which enhances well-being and has environmental benefits. It also allows organisations to cut estate costs by providing fewer desks and storage facilities – and even close down entire offices. It’s a tempting proposition in times of austerity.

But mobile working also carries significant risks for individuals and organisations. Research shows that being constantly connected through your smartphone leads to an erosion of boundaries between work and non-work. Plus, mobile workers face increasing external pressures to work more effectively and efficiently throughout a working day or week. For example, people may have to provide a report at the end of the day only when working remotely and may even be rung up by the office to check if they are indeed working.

*Under pressure*

The research, carried out in both public and private sector organisations, as well as among individual entrepreneurs, also reveals the internal pressures that mobile workers often feel. They feel compelled to work longer and later hours, and tend to make themselves constantly available via their tablet or smart phone. Frequently, they do not take adequate breaks and, in some cases, skip them altogether. As a result, many of them are constantly surrounded by work in all its shapes and sizes. Some of our interviewees reported a variety of behaviours that could harm their health and well-being. For example, they reduce their daytime breaks to extremely short periods – sometimes as brief as ten minute comfort breaks – as they are highly alert to the sound of incoming emails and feel compelled to respond instantly.

Others routinely check their work email, not only during the day but also as the very last thing they do at night and the very first thing they do in the morning. They are becoming, in the words of one participant, slaves to email. Some do not even associate checking and responding to their work-related emails as belonging to the realm of work; it is normal for them to do so in the evenings and on weekends. In fact, we have spoken to those who customarily interweave leisure with work by remaining available and responsive to work related demands during relaxation, such
as while watching an evening show on TV. Others say they do not mind logging on to remote access servers in the middle of the night (we’re talking 3am), over weekends, or while on holiday – because they feel pressured to be constantly, albeit remotely, at work.

Even acknowledging the demands of the modern, increasingly globalised and digitised economy, this behaviour indicates that mobile workers not only struggle to contain work within the boundaries of normal working hours or the working week. But they also find it hard to switch off work completely during what is traditionally regarded as non-work time.

Calling all managers
Meanwhile, managerial responses to a healthier balance between work and non-work are often half-hearted. After all, longer and harder work that comes from mobile working typically increases team productivity, efficiency and effectiveness. One manager we spoke to reported advising his team not to send email late in the evening or on weekends, while also emphasising that it was their responsibility to control their overall working pattern. By and large, organisations that strive to profit from the advantages offered by mobile working, without cushioning its psychological and social effects, are trying to have their cake and eat it.

The way that mobile working is introduced and communicated between managers and their teams influences how much internal pressure people subject themselves to. This is often under-appreciated. Yet the accumulated tensions on a personal level may, ultimately, affect not only people’s private lives, but also their work relationships and productivity in the long run.

Mobile working certainly has its benefits. But companies must ensure they think through how they introduce it and design well-balanced policies that take into account both the risks and advantages to ensure a win-win strategy for both the organisation and its employees.

Stefanie Reissner, Senior Lecturer in Management and Organization Studies, Newcastle University and Michal Izak, Reader in Management, University of Roehampton. This article was originally published on The Conversation.
Progress being made but more to do to create a diverse legal profession

New research by the universities of Leeds and Newcastle into the legal profession shows that progress is being made in creating a more diverse profession but that women and black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) solicitors still face career progression barriers.

The research was commissioned and published by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) and is the most extensive of its type. A team led by Jenny Tomlinson, Professor of Gender and Employment Relations at Leeds University Business School, analysed data for more than 194,000 solicitors between 1970 and 2016.

The research showed that the proportion of women and BAME people entering the profession has risen significantly. Around 10% of entrants were female in 1970 compared to 60% in 2016. Around half of all solicitors are now female. The study also showed that there has been a large increase in the proportion of BAME solicitors over the last three decades, from 0.25% in 1982 to 16% today. However, career progression remains an issue. The research shows that partnerships remain male dominated with just one third of partners female. The prospect of becoming a partner will vary depending on firm size. White males are over three times more likely to become a partner in large corporate firms than white females and six times more likely than BAME females. The best opportunities for females of all ethnicities to become a partner were in small firms, as is the case for BAME males.

Professor Jenny Tomlinson of Leeds University Business School said: “The solicitors’ profession is more diverse than ever before both in terms of gender and ethnicity - this is reflected in the increased diversity of many law firms, both large and small. While this is significant progress in terms of widening access to the profession there remain concerns about progression within it. There is still a large gap in probability of reaching partnership status with women and minorities being much less likely to become partners. It is also the case that minority women are the least likely to make partnership, and they face what is known as a double disadvantage or penalty. These trends are particularly pronounced in large corporate firms in central London and large firms in regional cities. While there has been much progress and important initiatives to widen participation, the challenge that lies ahead is how to make partnership profiles more representative of the wider solicitors’ profession.”
Professor Daniel Muzio of Newcastle University Business School said: “The study is unprecedented in terms of scope and accuracy. Based on the anonymised employment records of almost 200,000 solicitors our research provides an insight into gender and ethnicity in the profession of solicitors. This study is unique because it can link individual data to more than 10,000 firms, allowing for analysis of how diverse different firm profiles are by size, location and sector, as well as what the partnership prospects are for those entering these law firms.”

Paul Philip, SRA Chief Executive, said: “This independent research shows that although progress has been made, the sector still has some way to go. This is not about ticking boxes. Diverse, inclusive law firms benefit everybody. They can attract and retain the best people, regardless of background. If firms reflect the communities they serve, it may also help improve access to legal services.”

The independent research, as well as the SRA’s response, is available on the Solicitors Regulation Authority’s website.

**Complexity-Friendly Funding**

An innovative research project designed to address the question ‘how can charities and public services best help, when people’s lives are complex?’ aims to encourage charitable funders and public service commissioners to not only do things in a different way, but to ask an entirely different set of questions.

Toby Lowe, Senior Research Associate at Newcastle University Business School. Supported with £17,600 of National Lottery funding from the Big Lottery Fund, academics at Newcastle University Business School have worked in conjunction with Collaborate, an organisation which helps services to the public come together to tackle complex social challenges, to produce a report detailing the way in which funders are finding a different way of tackling the complexity of real world issues affecting public services and charitable trusts on a daily basis. The report highlights the problems which can occur when charitable funders and public service commissioners attempt to use a simplified ‘target-based’ model.

Toby Lowe explained: “Previously, many people have thought that people and organisations need to be motivated to perform well by being set targets. But this falls down when the complexities of the real world don’t fit into this simple mould – an everyday problem for those who pay for social interventions in areas such as care or education, “Our research aims to encourage charitable funders and public service commissioners to not only do things in a different way, but to ask an entirely different set of questions. Our findings suggest many are already starting to do this, placing central importance on 3 common things: the motivation of those who do the work, learning as the route to improving practice and the quality of relationships and the networks of which we are part.

“Examining the way in which staff are motivated is paramount. Those working in this sector tend to be intrinsically motivated to do the right thing and so aren’t necessarily inspired by hitting targets that don’t reflect the complexity of the lives of the people they are trying to help. They are more likely to respond to help and support to
improve their judgement and practice. “It’s also important to consider that the driver for improvement is learning. This learning comes from many sources including reflection, measurement and analysis. Viewing learning as a feedback loop will drive adaptation and improvement in a system.

“Effective funders also consider the quality of their internal and external connections. They invest in network infrastructure which enables them to communicate effectively and build positive, trusting relationships which in turn develop the skills of the people working for them.”

Annabel Davidson-Knight, head of practice at Collaborate, said: “Complex problems require collaborative solutions and increasing numbers of funders – across the public and voluntary spheres – are experimenting with new ways of sharing power. Many are stepping into the role of broker, convening stakeholders across the complex environments in which they operate, seeing the maintenance of ‘system health’ as a crucial part of their role.

“They invest both time and money into network infrastructure to do this. This is fundamentally challenging for certain institutional processes – and behaviours – nonetheless, many work in spite of these barriers, or in some cases as we’re seeing from the research, are dismantling these barriers, reinventing processes and behaviours to be more fit for purpose.

“Our research shows that trust is key here and enables those on the frontline to respond more effectively to the complexity of the lives of the people they are trying to help. It frees them up to respond to the issues that matter for people, moving beyond old notions of accountability.

“We now want to understand more about how funders and commissioners are responding to these challenges in their practice. If you move away from KPIs and targets, how do you know you’re having an impact? Is there still a role for measurement, and what is it? We’re looking forward to exploring these and other questions with a range of stakeholders in the coming months.”

Dawn Austwick, Chief Executive of the Big Lottery Fund said, “We all live and work in diverse communities which face a variety of challenges. Money from the National Lottery has enabled Newcastle University Business School to explore how funders, charities and organisations in the public sector can make the greatest impact in these complex and changing environments. This valuable report is a great opportunity for us all to develop our practices to best support people and communities across the issues that matter most to them.”

The initial research focused on the views of 15 charities and public services - 14 from across the UK and one from the USA. John Esterle of the Whitman Institute was one of the charitable funders to take part. He said: “The report provides a valuable service to philanthropy and the non-profit sector by not only questioning traditional assumptions about measurement, impact, and relationships, but by naming and framing organizational cultures and practices that support more grounded, effective, and equitable approaches to working in complex systems. We were honored to be interviewed for the study and are excited about the authors’
invitation to interested parties to join them in future learning and exploration aimed at shifting philanthropic practice in important and needed ways.”

Another participant, Gary Wallace of Plymouth Council, added: “The current challenges to health and social care - less money, more complexity, greater demand - are compounded by the old paradigm of purchaser/provider and the patterns of separation and disconnection it drives. This report is important because it offers an alternative vision of shared endeavour, mutual respect and collective growth. A vision where relationships, trust and diversity of opinion are valued and a future where all the participants can build a new paradigm together.”

A Whole New World: Funding and Commissioning in Complexity
published May 2017

House of Lords Select Committee report

Newcastle University London Accounting and Finance Lecturer, Dr Rama Kanungo, has recently had a submission published by the House of Lords Select Committee.

Dr Kanungs’s report was published under the Financial Exclusion in the HM Treasury Section. The House of Lords Select Committee on Financial Exclusion was set up on 25 May 2016. The remit of the Committee is “to consider financial exclusion and access to mainstream financial services”. The Committee aims to explore the key issues surrounding Financial Exclusion in the UK. Based on a number of selected oral and written submissions, the committee has published a report on 25th of March 2017 entitled “Tackling financial exclusion: A country that works for everyone?”

Dr Kanungo’s submission addresses a range of areas, including the importance of early engagement of financial institutions and service providers with the education sector, promoting Economic Socialisation and using FinTech at government level for social transfers, payroll, pensions, subsidies, government-subsidized loans, procurement, and unemployment benefits.

Sustainable mineral supply

The group calls for further resource governance and incentives to encourage the recycling of metals to combat global mineral depletion. Coordinated efforts are required to support mineral exploration globally and invest into new mineral
extraction technologies. With the global population due to reach 8.5 billion by 2030, the team, spanning five continents, has made a series of recommendations to prevent global mineral resource demand from outstripping future supply. As revealed in a peer-reviewed journal published in *Nature*, the slow adoption of green technologies is of particular concern to the researchers spanning five continents.

Dr. Natalia Yakovleva, Senior Lecturer in International Business Strategy at Newcastle University London, took part in the research funded by the International Union of Geological Sciences. “The continued depletion of mineral resources has implications for future shortages, market volatility and security of various industries that are dependent on the use of mineral resources”. A key recommendation is to develop incentives for recycling metals and supporting mineral exploration. “Markets are not always incentivised to invest into research, due to high costs of exploration, poor market conditions and discouraging socio-political situations,” she reveals.

Secondly, the development of global governance frameworks is needed. “Coordinated efforts are required to support mineral exploration globally and invest into new mineral extraction technologies”. Dr. Yakovleva adds that the promotion of knowledge exchange in the area of geological sciences is also encouraged. “Mineral supply also requires further efforts to improve governance of socio-economic and political parties affected by mineral resource exploitation”. If the rate of recycling is not improved by the time metal production peaks, the supply of metals and minerals will continue to decline. “This will lead to supply crises threatening downstream industries such as heavy industries, infrastructure, transport, energy, agriculture and food production”.

**Newcastle University Business and North East Initiative on Business Ethics (NIBE)** will be providing a space with other NE Universities to explore ethical issues. Ethical behaviour is a leadership choice that informs all aspects of our occupational and personal lives. It goes far wider than corporate social responsibility and is therefore the driver behind this ethics initiative across the region. The network will provide a series of events throughout the year free for anyone to attend and featuring high-profile guest speakers. NUBS also participates in the Responsible Business North East Network (RBNE) that runs regular events and support seminars for local businesses and students.
Athena SWAN Awards

Newcastle University was successful in achieving a Silver institutional award in April 2016. This demonstrates the University is committed to developing an inclusive culture that values all staff and NUBS is working towards applying for their departmental award during 2018.

Athena SWAN Charter

The Equality Challenge Unit’s Athena SWAN Charter recognises work undertaken to address gender equality in higher education.

In supporting the Athena SWAN Charter, the University has signed up to the 10 key principles:

- We acknowledge that academia cannot reach its full potential unless it can benefit from the talents of all
- We commit to advancing gender equality in academia
- We commit to addressing unequal gender representation across academic disciplines and professional support functions
- We commit to tackling the gender pay gap
- We commit to removing the obstacles faced by women, in particular at major points of career development and progression including the transition from PhD into a sustainable academic career
- We commit to addressing the negative consequences of using short-term contracts for the retention and progression of staff in academia, particularly women
- We commit to tackling the discriminatory treatment often experienced by trans people
- We acknowledge that advancing gender equality demands commitment and action from all levels of the organisation, and in particular, active leadership from those in senior roles
- We commit to making and mainstreaming sustainable structural and cultural changes to advance gender equality, recognising that initiatives and actions that support individuals alone will not sufficiently advance equality
- All individuals have identities shaped by several different factors. We commit to considering the intersection of gender and other factors wherever possible
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