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Northumbrian Water and Northumbria University make a splash in innovation festival

Exhausted students from Northumbria University, Newcastle, have completed a 24-hour challenge to explore our relationship with water and how to use it more sustainably.

The exercise was part of the Disruptive Innovation Festival (DIF) 2015, and supported by Northumbrian Water. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation's Sara Heinrich, live by videoconference from the Isle of White, introduced students to the Circular Economy model. They were then tasked with identifying how

and why water is wasted by households and businesses, and asked to respond by developing innovative ways to encourage behavioral change. Overnight the students produced short videos to highlight their findings, which they then presented to Northumbrian Water's Research and Development Manager, Chris Jones.

The whole activity was shared via Twitter with students posting their videos using the hashtag #UNNDIF15. This enabled a worldwide community interested in water use to connect with their work.

Solutions proposed by the undergraduate design students included smart kettles to avoid overfilling, creating interactive and fun renewable water bottles for children, and overcoming common misconceptions around the quality of tap water. One of the teams explained that tap water was always available, clean and healthy, and that persuading people to drink it more would cut down on the billions of plastic water bottles thrown away each year in the UK.

Chris Jones said: "I was incredibly impressed with the energy and creativity of the teams taking part. Northumbrian Water is committed to encouraging the responsible use of water, and the ideas developed over just 24 hours were innovative, exciting and something we can explore further as we continue to work with Northumbria. Partnerships like this are part of a wider collaboration around innovation and creativity that Northumbrian Water has with universities across the region, all of which helps to lead to many areas in the water industry."

[Mark Bailey](#), Director of Innovation Design at Northumbria, said: "Completing this 24-hour challenge was demanding, but also a great learning experience and I'm delighted with the way the students applied themselves to the tasks. This is also our second year as a key partner in the DIF and we are hugely excited to be involved again. It means we can showcase our research expertise and what we can offer to business in a range of subject areas, on a global scale and to new markets."

DIF 2015 is an online, open-access event staged over three weeks by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation. It invites thought leaders, entrepreneurs, business, designers, makers and learners to explore the question: "the economy is changing – what do I need to know, experience and do?" Over 10,000 attendees took part in the inaugural DIF last year, and the second

event is set to be even bigger, providing participants with opportunities to explore the economy through a different lens.

For more information on the DIF and to view the digital content sign up and register at thinkdif.co.

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