



Nathan Smith with his marine awareness business

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Student entrepreneur launches business with a social mission

A student at Northumbria University has launched his first business with a social mission to help raise awareness of ocean pollution and save marine life.

Nathan Smith, 21 from York, is a second year student on the [Entrepreneurial Business Management \(EBM\)](#) programme at Newcastle Business School. Following a trip to Thailand last summer, he was struck by the level of rubbish and plastics littering beautiful beaches and wondered how he

could encourage people to clean up and raise awareness of ocean pollution.

In response, he's set up OceanJunkie, a social enterprise which recycles discarded fishing nets into bracelets. The money raised from bracelet sales is then reinvested to help organise and fund community beach clean ups along the North East Coast in a bid to reduce ocean pollution and encourage conservation activities.

"OceanJunkie is start-up business dedicated to helping to fight the world's plastic problem. We upcycle GhostNets into bracelets with a mission to save marine life and give them back their ocean," says Nathan.

"Every bracelet purchased represents a marine life saved from a tragic death. We want to rid the world of GhostNets and hope the awareness we raise through people buying our bracelets and supporting the OceanJunkie movement will help to bring in regulations for the proper disposal of fishing gear."

Nathan's bracelets are handmade in the UK from nets pulled out of the ocean. Each bracelet is unique as every net is slightly different. They come in three colours and retail online for £5 plus postage and packing trading under @JunkieOcean on Facebook and Instagram.

During his studies on Northumbria University's pioneering Entrepreneurial Business Management programme, Nathan has been encouraged to develop his passion for marine conservation into a commercial, sustainable enterprise.

"The EBM programme has given me the resources, confidence and motivation to create OceanJunkie," says Nathan. "Prior to coming to university, I knew that I wanted to set up in business but I felt that I didn't know enough to go it alone. I heard about EBM programme from a student in the year above. I was instantly hooked, it offered the business development and skills support I was looking for and I achieve a degree at the same time.

"Through the OceanJunkie ethos of recycling, I want people to realise the impact that plastic and GhostNets are having on our marine life and our oceans and to give people the opportunity to make a difference and help the environment.

"My vision is to reinvest profits into supporting beach clean ups across the country, ensuring groups have the funds to purchase the tools they need, as well as donating money to support the important work of the Marine Conservation Society."

This month OceanJunkie is supporting 'Go Green Week' at Leicester University to raise the profile of ocean pollution and the importance of marine conservation. Nathan is also developing plans to support a number community beach cleans in the North East by sponsoring clean up tools and bags.

The EBM programme focuses on independent, real world learning, with students working to launch their own businesses and learn from their successes and mistakes. The programme is based on a Finnish model of education, called Team Academy, and Northumbria was one of the first two universities to pioneer this approach in the UK.

Dr Alex Hope, Associate Professor of Business Ethics at Northumbria University, said: "Northumbria University is committed to promoting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through our research, teaching and enterprise activities. We are signatory to the UN SDG Accord and have embedded the goals into our University Strategy.

"I am delighted that Nathan's business will help us in this mission and highlight the real problem of plastics in the marine environment and proud that our EBM programme is helping to create responsible and sustainable businesses."

Northumbria University has been named the UK's top ranked university for graduate business start-ups based on turnover. According to the latest report by the Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCIS), turnover from Northumbria graduate businesses for 2016/17 reached £80.3 million – over £30 million more than the second placed institution. The combined turnover for Northumbria graduate businesses also grew by more than £10 million on the previous year.

Through support services such as [Student Graduate Enterprise](#), the University has supported the development of more than 200 graduate businesses, which currently employ over 1,000 and now have a combined annual turnover in excess of £80 million.

Northumbria is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. To find out more about our courses go to www.northumbria.ac.uk

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