



Leven Brown pictured with Northumbria University Design for Industry students

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Top rowers inspire design students

Students on Northumbria University's Design for Industry degree took part in a design challenge with a difference when they were visited by two of the UK's best ocean rowers.

Leven Brown, one of the world's most experienced and highly regarded ocean rowing skippers, and Phil Kite, a North East businessman and ocean rower based in Newcastle, visited Northumbria's School of Design to take part in an 'innovation sprint'.

Organised by Senior Lecturer in Design for Industry Simon Scott-Harden, the aim of the event was to demonstrate to the 40 students how innovative ideas can be generated within a relatively short time-frame by brain storming as a team in a fluid working environment.

Students were set the task of coming up with ideas to improve the performance, comfort, safety and aesthetics of high-performance ocean rowing boats.

Leven's first ocean row, from mainland Spain to Trinidad and Tobago, was solo and unsupported, and to date he has rowed some 30,000 nautical miles, including the North Atlantic from New York to the Scilly Isles and across the Indian Ocean from Western Australia to the to the Seychelles.

Leven was therefore able to outline the challenges ocean rowers face and the demand on the 10-metre craft that he designs and builds at his business in Jedburgh.

Leven Brown said: "Phil and I were delighted to visit Northumbria, and take part in the sprint, that generated so many creative ideas, from which we hope a number can be taken forward and incorporated in the ocean rowing boats of the future.

"The students' enthusiasm for the challenge created real energy in the room and it's easy to see why the School of Design has such a high reputation for innovation and creativity."

Next year Leven is leading an expedition to row the Northwest Passage – the infamous arctic route between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans – and Phil, who rowed the Atlantic Ocean in 2019, will be part of the crew.

Phil briefed the students on this 2,000 mile challenge, known as the Ultimate Ocean Row, which, if successful, will be a world first.

Phil said: "We had a fantastic day at the School of Design and we are grateful to Simon for giving us the opportunity to tap into the resources at Northumbria.

"Looking ahead to our Northwest Passage expedition, we hope we will be

able to work with the University and carry out research in the arctic on their behalf

“The environment in the region is changing and collecting data on weather, wildlife and sea pollutants such as plastics is a great opportunity for the advancement of our knowledge base.”

Senior Lecturer Simon Scott-Harden said: “It was great to have Leven and Phil on campus, sharing their experiences of both business and ocean rowing. Having our students working on real live industry projects is one of our core goals.

“We look forward to following these two amazing adventurers on their arctic challenge over the coming year.”

You can follow the Ultimate Ocean Row at www.nwp2021.com

Find out more about Northumbria University’s [School of Design](#) and [Design for Industry BA \(Hons\)](#) course.

Photo credits: Leven Brown and Phil Kite

Notes to editors

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To request and check the availability of our experts or for any other media enquiries please contact our Media and Communications team on +44 (0)191 227 4604 or email media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk.

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