



George Clarke speaking at a public lecture at Northumbria University

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University and TV architect join forces to develop new homes of the future

The ways that homes are designed and built in the future could be completely transformed, thanks to a new project between Northumbria University, Newcastle and the renowned architect, TV presenter and campaigner George Clarke.

The University has signed an agreement with Clarke's charity, the Ministry of Building Innovation and Education (MOBIE), to work together to drive innovation in designing and delivering homes for the future.

The partnership was officially announced during the UK Construction Week event at Birmingham NEC.

MOBIE was founded by Clarke in 2017 to promote innovation in the design and delivery of homes through education and the charity currently works with a number of schools, colleges and universities. However, this is the first time that MOBIE has focussed on embedding research and innovation into businesses.

The new MOBIE Northumbria Homes for the Future Innovation Centre will help businesses involved in the design and delivery of homes access the latest in research and innovation at Northumbria University to drive the transformation of the sector.

The centre will investigate new methods of construction, design, offsite manufacture, digital competencies and materials with the aim of making house building a more efficient and precise process. It will provide greater quality control, using the latest technologies, all while ensuring the needs of residents and communities are met.

Over the next three years, Northumbria will offer a total of 15 co-funded PhD studentships to work with industry partners through the centre. The University will jointly fund the studentships, meaning businesses will invest roughly £10,000 per year for each of the three years.

Following initial discussions with experts from Northumbria, who will work with the partners to develop a bespoke research project addressing the needs of the business, a PhD student will then be appointed to work exclusively on that project for three years, whilst pursuing their studies. This will equip them with vital new knowledge, skills and business acumen, creating a new generation to advance the homes of the future.

George Clarke explained: “One of the best ways that we can address the current housing crisis is by implementing digital technologies to build next generation homes quicker, at a lower cost and with less environmental impact.

“To do that, we need to provide businesses in the construction sector with affordable access to the very latest in research and development.

“By partnering with Northumbria University and appointing doctoral students to work with the businesses, we can ensure we are passing on the very latest in research and thinking into the building sector to transform the way it works.

“Ultimately, we want to create better quality homes that will drive a better quality of life for everyone living in them.”

Dr Paul Jones, Professor of Scholarship in Architecture at Northumbria University said: “We are so pleased to be working with George and the team at MOBIE on this new initiative.

“By opening our doors to businesses, we will be able to work with them to develop truly innovative techniques that will create positive change in the industry, create high quality homes for those who need them and help businesses by driving growth.

“We are already speaking to businesses who are keen to benefit from this new opportunity and we welcome contact from any other businesses who might be keen to find out more.”

Recruitment is already underway for industry partners and the first PhD students, in time for the centre to officially begin operating from April 2020.

To find out more about opportunities to get involved with the MOBIE Northumbria Homes for the Future Innovation Centre, please visit www.northumbria.ac.uk/mobie

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Business and Law / Arts, Design & Social Sciences

rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk

07923 382339



Andrea Slowey

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

Engineering and Environment / Health and Life Sciences

andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk

07708 509436



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Gemma Brown

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk