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Alumna and MP shines a light on Northumbria research

Northumbria alumna Emma Lewell-Buck MP returned to the University campus for the first time as an MP to view pioneering research into low carbon technologies.

Emma Lewell-Buck MP, who became South Shields first woman MP in the May by-election, met with Northumbria researchers who have been involved in the research and development of photovoltaics – or solar cells – for more than 20 years.

Northumbria Photovoltaics Application Centre (NPAC) is currently working on an £850,000 Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council project to source new materials that can be used to manufacture solar energy panels at a reduced cost, making them more competitive with retail electricity prices.

The campus visit highlighted Northumbria's on-going work in low carbon technologies, including research and design partnerships with local companies in the development of electric vehicles, and the use of wind turbines to generate electrical energy and provide data for research purposes. The MP also heard how Northumbria researchers have also helped to prepare policy-makers for an increase in electric vehicles by developing a tool to predict the impact they will have on the national grid.

Labour MP Emma Lewell-Buck graduated from Northumbria University with a degree in Politics and Media Studies. Enjoying her first visit to the campus as an MP and not a student, she said: "The University has changed so much since I was a student there. I am really impressed at the innovative way they are approaching learning, with a range of practical and real training opportunities. The advances they are making with low carbon technology, their approach to law and their clinical skills centre means Northumbria is the place where employers can be assured graduates are work-ready from day one.

"I would like to thank all of the staff and students who took time from their busy day to show me their work, they are all clearly enthusiastic and passionate about what they do."

The campus tour took in the Student Law Office, a real-life clinical legal education scheme that enables students – supervised by practicing lawyers – to advise and represent clients as part of their academic and professional development. The MP also viewed the Clinical Skills Centre, which houses hospital-simulation environments for health-related students studying at the University's Coach Lane Campus; and paid a visit to Sport Central, Northumbria's £30m state-of-the-art sports and research facility.

Lucy Winskell, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Business and Engagement at Northumbria University, said: "It's been a pleasure welcoming Emma back to Northumbria University and having the opportunity to showcase the leading-edge research for which this university is increasingly being recognised.

“Tyneside has an enormous amount to offer the UK in low carbon technologies, a fact Emma has already made clear in Parliament. Her support for the work Northumbria and others are undertaking is invaluable.”

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