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‘Big Society’ award for Fencing North East

Fencing North East, an organisation set up in 2008 in partnership with Northumbria and Durham universities, has been recognised by Prime Minister David Cameron with a Big Society Award.

The organisation has provided sports opportunities for young people in Northumberland, Tyne and Wear, Durham, Cumbria and Teesside who have gone on to compete at National, European and Paralympic levels.

The organisation was created to address the lack of provision for fencing in the region. Northumbria University secured a grant to employ a Fencing Development Officer to work both within the community and the partner

universities.

Since its inception, Fencing North East has trained 69 unemployed young people as 'Go Fence' leaders, who have in turn introduced over 800 people from their communities to fencing. Inspired by the 2012 Olympics and supported by its successful partnership approach and dedicated volunteers, the group hopes to take ten leaders to Rio during the 2016 Olympics.

Prime Minister, David Cameron, said: "Fencing North East has had a real impact across the North East, inspiring young people to take up a new sport and helping them to gain confidence, skills and even qualifications.

"I'm delighted to be recognising the achievements of everyone who volunteers, coaches and takes part with this Big Society Award."

Marie Matheson, Chair, Fencing North East said: "I'm very proud of my involvement with Fencing North East, and have found working with all of our volunteers and participants inspirational on so many levels. I'm delighted that the hard work and creativity of our volunteers has been recognised with a Big Society Award from the Prime Minister."

Colin Stromsoy, Head of Sport at Northumbria University, said: "It is truly fantastic to see Fencing North East recognised through the Big Society awards.

"For many years Northumbria has worked with local organisations in supporting healthy lifestyles and in providing opportunities in sport to local people that might otherwise not be available and our support of Fencing North East is a great example of this activity.

"My congratulations to everyone involved in the organisation, particularly Beth Davidson and our very own Sue Vout who have all played a major role in this success."

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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