



Wave founder Ross Longhorn, pictured with students from Northumbria University's Business Clinic

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Eco-friendly start-up gains business boost from Northumbria University students

An eco-friendly phone accessory start-up is making waves in the market, with a quarter of a million turnover in just its second year.

Wave, which was founded in 2019 by a couple of friends from the North East, has been working with students from the Business Clinic at Northumbria University's Newcastle Business School to help identify more sustainable ways of working.

The company is transforming the phone accessories market, with a range of

stylish, biodegradable mobile phone and AirPods cases made from wheat straw – providing greener alternatives to plastic, everyday products, and making sustainability more accessible to the public.

As Northumbria University alumni themselves, the friends, including Ross Longhorn, 27, undertook consultancy projects at the University's Business Clinic, as part of their degree courses.

They recognised the value the scheme can add to businesses and were keen to get involved when they started their own business, as they knew they would benefit from working with a consultancy team.

The company received support from students to research the feasibility of moving production from China to the UK.

The Business Clinic is an education scheme whereby a group of business students form a 'consultancy firm' to provide free advice for clients. Supervised by experienced tutors, students are asked to analyse the problem they are presented with, consider possible solutions and provide a detailed report and full presentation of their recommendations for their client.

Ross Longhorn, 27, one of the founders of [Wave](#), said: "Northumbria University provided a springboard to our careers and gave us the confidence and grounding to start our own business, so we were especially keen to give something back. Working with a real business offers students invaluable insight into the world of work, and gives them something tangible to discuss at interviews.

"The team provided us with a fantastic report which we have used to make decisions about the business going forward. Hopefully they've learnt plenty of skills working on the project, and enjoyed the experience."

Ross, who graduated in 2017, used his own entrepreneurial spirit to grow Wave, which is now one of the UK's leading brands of biodegradable phone cases. The company is part of a growing movement in sustainability and a business with a social purpose to tackle the devastating effects of plastic pollution.

Working with the Northumbria University students, he was impressed with their approach to sustainability, and the different perspectives they brought to the business.

Ross continued: “We’re focused on giving back to the community at Wave, so we are keen to bring production to the UK and work with manufacturers who share our ethos for sustainability and environmentally friendly processes. The team considered a range of options and put forward solid recommendations, which we are assessing as part of our business plan. It’s an exciting time for the business, we’re still fairly new to the market, and we’ve already seen a surge in demand for our products.

“We want to create more jobs closer to home and the students were able to take time to research opportunities and look at things from different angles, which we often don’t get time to do when we are busy running the business day-to-day. They should be exceptionally proud of themselves for what they have achieved and the levels of professionalism they have shown.”

Team member and final year Accounting student, Joseph Vesey, age 23, from Cardiff, said: “Wave was an excellent company to work with, the values and approach to tackling pollution and supporting the environment, is something I am fully behind. It was great to be able to apply the skills I’ve learnt over the years to a real world client. I feel much more confident in myself and I’m proud of what we achieved as a team. I’ve been able to get under the skin of an actual brief as you would in any consultancy role, and I have learnt business etiquette, which I will take forward into my future career.”

Another member of the team, Panagiota Protopapa, age 20, from Cyprus, commented: “After COVID, it has been fantastic being around people again and experiencing a business environment. I’ve gained a lot of professional skills, as well as communications skills and teamwork.”

Since its inception in 2013 the pioneering Business Clinic has provided free student-led consultancy advice to some 600 clients with an estimated value of £3.3 million.

Nigel Coates, Director of the Business Clinic at Northumbria University, said: “It is always a pleasure collaborating with a wide range of businesses and charities from different sectors. We thoroughly enjoyed welcoming Business Clinic alumni back to the University, and we are very proud to see how far they have come since graduating.

“The Business Clinic is continuing to go from strength to strength and it is fantastic to offer our students the opportunity to work directly with leaders across a range of businesses from SMEs and multinationals through to not-for-profit organisations. The scheme not only enhances the learning

experience and the employability skills of our students but delivers considerable benefits for our clients.

“We’re looking forward to supporting even more businesses in the years to come, and we would encourage any firms interested in free support from The Business Clinic to get in touch.”

To find out more about free consultancy support please visit [The Business Clinic](#).

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