



Fashion industry representatives gathered at Northumbria as part of the Behind the Break project

Oct 06, 2025 10:34 BST

## Global fashion giants unite at Northumbria to combat textile microfibre crisis

**Leading fashion brands from across the globe gathered at Northumbria University recently for a landmark event showcasing cutting-edge research into microfibre pollution from textiles.**

The meeting took place at the University's [Fibre-fragmentation and Environment Research Hub](#) (FibER Hub), established earlier this year through a collaboration between the University and [The Microfibre Consortium](#) (TMC),

a science-led non-profit organisation that is leading global efforts to reduce fibre fragment loss and release from all textiles to the natural environment.

Industry giants including adidas, BESTSELLER and ON Running came together with textile manufacturers Positive Materials and Paradise Textiles, as well as global impact organisation [Fashion for Good](#) and TMC.

With further support from partners such as Levi's, Under Armour, C&A, Kering, Inditex & Norrøna, the project marks a significant milestone in collaborative efforts to address one of fashion's most pressing environmental challenges.

The event at Northumbria concluded the initial phase of the [Behind the Break: Exploring Fibre Fragmentation](#) project, a comprehensive study examining microfibre shedding across 24 different fabric types.

Led by Fashion for Good in partnership with TMC and Northumbria University, the research tested materials representing various dyeing processes, construction methods, and manufacturing variables to understand the root causes of fibre fragmentation.

[Dr Alana James](#) is an Associate Professor at Northumbria University and Principal Investigator for the [IMPACT+ network](#), which brings together academics and fashion representatives to share important knowledge that will help make the industry more sustainable and circular.

Speaking about the event, she said: "The level of industry engagement we've witnessed demonstrates the urgent need for science-led solutions to microfibre pollution. Having global brands travel from the US and Europe to Northumbria to participate in this event shows there's real appetite for understanding and addressing the root causes of this environmental issue."

During the two-day event, attendees received exclusive demonstrations of three different test methods used to determine fibre loss, including advanced characterisation techniques across different university facilities.



Dr Alana James (far right) and Dr Kelly Sheridan (second from right) demonstrate the work being done within the FibER Hub

The FibER Hub features state-of-the-art equipment designed to understand exactly what and how much fibre different fabrics shed throughout their lifespan.

The research has revealed complex challenges within the textile supply chain, including potential contamination as fabrics travel thousands of miles from manufacturing to finished products. Participants expressed keen interest in understanding these contamination levels and their implications for microfibre shedding.

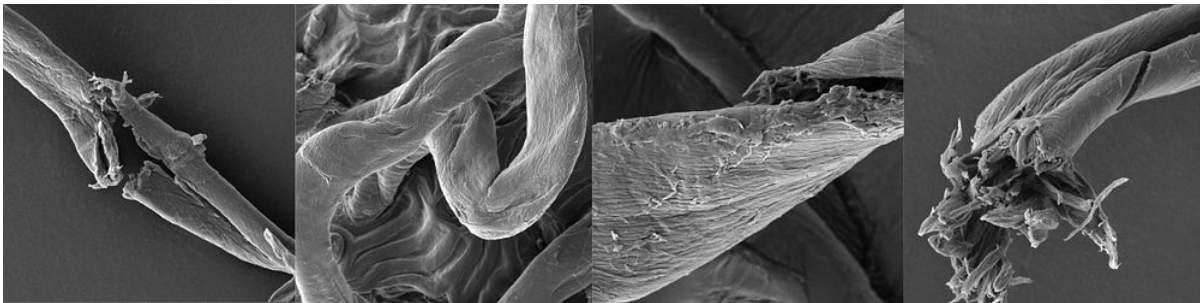
[Dr Kelly Sheridan](#), Chief Executive Officer of TMC and Associate Professor in Forensic Science at Northumbria University, said: “This collaboration enables us to expand our knowledge offering to our growing signatory base by drawing on Northumbria’s interdisciplinary skills and technical capabilities. The interest and enthusiasm displayed at this event reinforces the critical importance of addressing fibre fragment pollution through robust, comprehensive research.”

The [Behind the Break](#) project was launched earlier this year in partnership



with textile manufacturers including Paradise Textiles in China, Positive Materials in Portugal & Artistic Milliners in Pakistan, alongside major fashion brands.

However, the research has highlighted that with hundreds of tests conducted on 24 fabrics, this represents just a small sample when considered against the variety of raw materials and complexity of manufacturing processes performed in the supply chain.



Samples of fibres from different fabrics, which have been analysed as part of the project.

Following the success of the event at Northumbria, all participating brands have expressed interest in continuing the research into additional phases. Plans are already underway to expand the study with larger sample sizes and explore different fabric characteristics and finishes.

The FibER Hub collaboration forms part of the broader [IMPACT+](#) project, a multi-disciplinary network funded through [UK Research and Innovation's circular fashion and textile programme NetworkPlus](#).

[Established in 2023](#), IMPACT+ includes academics from Northumbria University, King's College London and Loughborough University, working alongside industry partners to challenge how environmental impact is measured across fashion and textile industries.

While current research has focused on simulated laundering as the industry standard test method, future work being carried out by the FibER Hub will expand to examine microfibre loss through air and other environmental pathways. Recent funding from Innovate UK has already supported TMC and Northumbria's development of potential new test methods for capturing and quantifying airborne microfibres.

The research emphasises addressing microfibre pollution at its source rather than relying solely on downstream solutions such as washing machine filters, aligning with TMC's mission to facilitate science-led change within the industry through its Microfibre 2030 Commitment and Roadmap.

Northumbria University offers an [MA Sustainable and Ethical Fashion](#) which equips students with the knowledge to become an expert in ethics and sustainability, anticipating the demands of the future fashion industry.

---

### ***About Northumbria University***

UNIVERSITY OF THE YEAR 2022 (Times Higher Education Awards)

Northumbria is a research-intensive university that unlocks potential for all, changing lives regionally, nationally and internationally.

Two thirds of Northumbria's undergraduate students come from the North East region and go into employment in the region when they graduate, demonstrating Northumbria's significant contribution to social mobility and levelling up in the North East of England.

Find out more about us at [www.northumbria.ac.uk](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk)

--- Please contact [media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:media.communications@northumbria.ac.uk) with any media enquiries or interview requests ---

### ***About The Microfibre Consortium***

The Microfibre Consortium (TMC) is a science-led non-profit that leads the Microfibre 2030 Commitment and Roadmap, to mitigate fibre fragment loss and release from all textiles to the environment, through global multi-stakeholder collaboration. It is the first and only organisation that is wholeheartedly focused on this topic and works on behalf of its signatory base, which comprises brands, retailers, suppliers, researchers, laboratories and affiliated organisations.

Since 2018, TMC has worked to connect and translate deep academic research with the reality of commercial supply chain production. Driven by research, with industry change at its core, TMC addresses fibre fragmentation through interventions in textile design, development and manufacturing, taking a holistic approach in creating change for the lifecycle of fabrics.

Within design and development, TMC's approach is to influence root cause change. By understanding the drivers of fibre fragmentation through fabric testing, the development of practical solutions can be facilitated to address the problem at its source - the textile itself.

Within manufacturing, TMC aligns guidance across the sector to ensure clear and measurable action on managing fibre fragment loss and release in production through improvements in manufacturing processes, and wastewater management.

The work of TMC is managed by a core team of professionals that is led by CEO Dr Kelly Sheridan. Supporting the team as required, the TMC Technical Committee and TMC Advisory Group convene industry experts to provide strategic and technical guidance. Find out more about the work of TMC at [www.microfibreconsortium.com](http://www.microfibreconsortium.com).

## Contacts



### **Rik Kendall**

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

[rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:rik.kendall@northumbria.ac.uk)

07923 382339



### **Andrea Slowey**

Press Contact

Head of Corporate Communications (interim)

[andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:andrea.slowey@northumbria.ac.uk)

07708 509436



**Rachael Barwick**

Press Contact

PR and Media Manager

[rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk)

07377422415



**James Fox**

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

[james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk)



**Kelly Elliott**

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

[kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk)



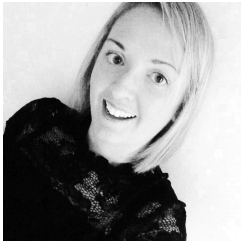
**Ruth Lognonne**

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

[ruth.lognonne@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.lognonne@northumbria.ac.uk)

07971274253



**Gemma Brown**

Press Contact

PR and Media Officer

[gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:gemma6.brown@northumbria.ac.uk)