



Business Clinic students Nathan Binns, George Dawson, Ella Craggs and Elliot Cowie with David Turton and Matt Godwin of Nexus

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## Northumbria students launch green awareness campaign for Metro operator

**Public transport executive Nexus has teamed up with a group of talented Northumbria University business students to work out ways of promoting its green credentials to encourage more customers to use the Tyne and Wear Metro.**

The four students, who are all from the Business Clinic at Northumbria, were tasked with capturing Metro's environmental credentials as a unique selling point in order to boost passenger numbers in line with or above pre-

pandemic levels.

Owned and operated by Nexus, the Metro is a light rail network that has recovered faster than most after the pandemic. However, structural changes to society caused by the pandemic have changed the way people travel. During the pandemic, patronage on the Metro network dropped to as low as 5% of pre-COVID levels and although this figure has increased since then, Nexus anticipates that without interventions, patronage will not recover to pre-pandemic levels.

The Business Clinic students – Ella Craggs, Nathan Binns, George Dawson and Elliot Cowie – carried out an in-depth audit focusing on the environmental credentials of Metro, and created a survey to understand the travel habits of Metro users and potential users. The survey findings revealed that users and non-users are conscious of climate change and are willing to change their transport habits for some journeys, yet are unaware of the environmental credentials of Metro.

The students came up with a range of recommendations in a gold, silver and bronze-tiered format to promote these credentials effectively to Metro customers and the wider public.

The gold tier recommendation was to launch a targeted physical marketing campaign, making use of billboard advertising located on private transport routes, posters and increased engagement with local schools via an art competition coinciding with the introduction of the new Metro fleet.

The silver tier recommendation was a targeted social media campaign using platforms such as Facebook and Instagram and engaging with prominent social media influencers, while the bronze tier recommendation focused on updates to the Metro POP app showcasing the environmental benefits of using this form of transport.

Helen Mathews, Head of Corporate Planning at Nexus, says: “We were really impressed with the work that the students produced. They understood the brief well and came up with some novel recommendations that we can take forward as we seek to promote the environmental benefits of Metro travel to a wider audience.

“We’re confident that this project with the Business Clinic will enable us to achieve our goal of increasing passenger numbers to levels seen before the COVID pandemic – and perhaps even exceed those levels.”

Nigel Coates, Director of the Business Clinic at Northumbria University, says: “We were delighted to work on such a worthwhile project with one of the region’s most prominent transport operators. Nexus was keen to enlist our support to find ways of promoting the environmental benefits of using Metro over private modes of transport. The students enjoyed the opportunity to showcase their analytical skills and business acumen on a project that will reap tangible benefits for Nexus and the wider community.”

Ella Craggs, team leader at Clear Consulting – the name of the student organisation that worked on the project, said: “It was fantastic to gain such invaluable practical experience to complement our academic studies; it will look great on our CVs and give us the edge over our peers when applying for a job. We had an excellent professional relationship with Nexus. They were easy to work with and gave us some really positive feedback on many of our ideas.

“At times it was challenging to keep to project deadlines and timescales, but all four of us have complementary skills so we made it work well.”

The Business Clinic at Northumbria University offers pro-bono consultancy support to SMEs, multi-national organisations, charitable organisations, educational trusts and social enterprises that operate across a wide range of sectors, both in the North East of England as well as further afield in the UK and overseas.

Students work at the Business Clinic within their final year of study, offering clients a full consultancy experience that takes in activities as diverse as feasibility studies including finance, investment and growth; HR including recruitment, retention and diversity; marketing including branding and digital; business analytics; logistics and supply chain. The aim of each project is to undertake research and make recommendations that will benefit the organisation in the short and long term.

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