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Northumbria University recognised in UK's Best Breakthroughs List

Antarctic research from Northumbria University, Newcastle has today been named as one of the UK's 100 best breakthroughs for its significant impact on people's everyday lives.

The University is honoured in the UK's Best Breakthroughs list of the last century for its pioneering work to assess how and when the massive Thwaites Glacier in Antarctica will collapse.

Researchers from Northumbria are taking part in a £20 million UK-US

collaboration to establish whether the glacier will collapse over the next few decades or centuries. Global sea levels are expected to rise by between 3-5 metres when the Thwaites Glacier – which is almost the size of Great Britain – collapses and releases its ice into the ocean. This will fundamentally change the world's geography and displace millions of people as the rising seas submerge coastal regions, islands and cities based on rivers.

Northumbria researchers are examining how the glacier has evolved over time. This will enable them to better predict how it will behave in future and respond to the changing environment. They are using specialist computer modelling techniques and will travel to Antarctica to drill into the bedrock 200 metres below the ice and look for evidence of exposure to the atmosphere in the past. This will enable them to see whether the way the glacier is behaving today is unique and a rapid and catastrophic response to climate change, or if it is part of the normal life cycle of these Antarctic glacier systems.

[View embedded content here](#)

[Northumbria University to investigate how and when the Antarctic's Thwaites Glacier might collapse](#) from [Northumbria University](#) on [Vimeo](#).

The list of breakthroughs demonstrates how UK universities are at the forefront of some of the world's most important discoveries, innovations and social initiatives, including the discovery of penicillin, work tackling plastic pollution, ultrasound scans to check the health of unborn babies and the establishment of the Living Wage.

The list also highlights the less celebrated but vital breakthroughs that transform lives, including a specially-designed bra to help women undergoing radiotherapy; a toilet that flushes human waste without the need for water; the development of a new scrum technique to make rugby safer; a sports initiative that aims to use football to resolve conflict in divided communities; - and even work to protect the quality of the chocolate we eat.

The list was compiled by Universities UK, the umbrella group for UK universities, as part of the MadeAtUni campaign to change public perceptions of universities and bring to life the difference they make to people, lives and communities across the UK.

It follows independent research undertaken by Britain Thinks which found that the public has little understanding of the benefits of universities beyond undergraduate teaching. The findings show that research is one of the key triggers to change opinion about universities but for many people, it is an abstract concept.

Professor Andrew Wathey, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of Northumbria University, said: “I am delighted that Northumbria is featured in the UK’s Best Breakthrough list. We’re extremely proud of the work of our academics and the difference their research makes to people, lives and communities.

“The MadeAtUni campaign is an important initiative for Northumbria as it allows students, alumni, the local community and the wider population to understand better the research that we do and the impact it has.”

Professor Dame Janet Beer, President of Universities UK, said: “Universities really do transform lives. The technology we use every day, the medicines that save lives, the teachers who inspire – all come from UK universities and the important work being done by academics.

“The UK’s Best Breakthroughs list is a testament to the difference that universities make to people’s lives and we want everyone to join us in celebrating the work they do.”

The UK’s Best Breakthroughs list: 100+ Ways Universities Have Improved Everyday Life was put together in partnership with universities across the UK.

As part of the MadeAtUni campaign, every university in the country was invited to nominate the one thing from their institution which they believe has had the biggest impact on people, lives and communities. Over 100 universities submitted a nomination. The entries cover health, technology, environment, family, community and culture and sport.

You can find out more about the UK's Best Breakthroughs and the MadeAtUni campaign here www.madeatuni.org.uk

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Contacts



Rik Kendall

Press Contact
PR and Media Manager
Business and Law
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



James Fox

Press Contact

Student Communications Manager

james2.fox@northumbria.ac.uk



Kelly Elliott

Press Contact

PR and Media Coordinator

Arts Design and Social Sciences / Engineering and Environment

kelly2.elliott@northumbria.ac.uk



Rachael Barwick

Press Contact

PR and Media Coordinator

Health and Life Sciences / Sport

rachael.barwick@northumbria.ac.uk

07377422415



Ruth Lognonne

Press Contact

PR and Media Coordinator

Health and Life Sciences / Sport

ruth.lognonne@northumbria.ac.uk



Emily Morris

Press Contact

Corporate Communications Coordinator

emily.l.morris@northumbria.ac.uk