



Emily Ross (far right), Stronger Shores Project Delivery Officer, with Business Clinic students (from l-r) Katy Gilbert, Stephanie Boast, Alie Bendoy (crouching), Lucy Coates (crouching), and Northumbria University film student Siobhan Coughlan

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## Power of digital marketing helps children understand coastal erosion

**Climate-conscious business students are helping South Tyneside Council to educate the next generation about the importance of preserving coastal communities to stave off climate change.**

The students from Northumbria University's Business Clinic were asked to create a digital marketing strategy to help the Council educate school-aged children about Stronger Shores – a project that uses the power of nature to

restore our ocean's health and create sustainable coastal communities in the face of flooding, erosion and the impact of climate change.

The students explored how hidden habitats below the waves – seagrass meadows, kelp forests and oyster reefs – can help to improve water quality, reduce erosion, stabilise shorelines, reduce wave impacts, create rich wildlife, protect against pollution, improve fisheries, protect against climate change, and extend the lifespan of man-made coastal defences.

They then devised ways of helping school-aged children to gain a deeper understanding of these pressing issues through the medium of video and other digital marketing tools.

Katy Gilbert led the team of Business Clinic students, which also included Alie Bendoy, Stephanie Boast and Lucy Coates.

Katy says: “We conducted in-depth research on the Stronger Shores project, attitudes to climate change, and the types of digital marketing tools we could use to help children think about the importance of healthy coastal communities. We found that most children use a tablet and like to visit the coast, but not many were aware of the effects of coastal erosion even though they believed that protecting the coast is important.

“We spoke to parents and school teachers and they said a combination of interactive tools should be used to help the children's education, including games, school trips and videos. They also indicated that augmented reality (AR), an interactive technology that combines real-world and computer-generated content, was a good way of inspiring the children and retaining their interest.”

The students came up with a range of recommendations in a gold, silver and bronze-tiered format to educate children about Stronger Shores using digital technologies.

The gold tier recommendation was an AR-led interactive adventure trail that could be used inside and outside of school. Users could follow the trail along the South Shields coastline and discover a magical array of marine plants and animals, scan QR codes to learn fun facts, and see the plants and animals come to life in an AR setting. The trail could be promoted through teacher

recommendations to pupils and parents, posted in local Facebook groups, and even used as part of an out-of-school family activity or school field trip.

The silver tier recommendation focused on a gaming app for teachers and parents to download to encourage children to learn about Stronger Shores and climate change, while the bronze tier recommendation was the production of a video (see link below) that could be incorporated within the national curriculum and posted on various social media channels. The video was produced by a team of film students at the University, including Naomi Savage, Charlotte Stead, Hannah Miller, Rebecca Tatters and Siobhan Coughlan.

Emily Ross, Stronger Shores project delivery officer at South Tyneside Council, says: “It was clear that the students understood our brief very well. They suggested some excellent recommendations that we can take forward to educate children – who will be the generation most affected by climate change – about the value of preserving our rich coastal heritage.

“It was also helpful that the students included a detailed analysis of costs and educational benefits that the video, gaming app and adventure trail would generate for children.”

Stronger Shores is funded by Defra as part of the £150 million Flood and Coastal Resilience Innovation Programme (FCRIP), which is managed by the Environment Agency. It has the potential to transform how the government approaches coastal protection and, by establishing an affordable framework of solutions, could justify policy change and unlock future funding for marine habitat restoration that will benefit nature, people and the planet.

Nigel Coates, founder of the Business Clinic at Northumbria University, says: “It was good for the students to work on a very worthwhile project that has strong benefits for the local community. Helping young people to understand the critical issue of coastal erosion, and the part they can play in tackling it, is vital as we look to stave off climate change and preserve our beautiful North East coastline.”

“Many of our projects are interdisciplinary in nature and involve successful collaborations between students and organisations across different areas of work. This was highlighted once again by Stronger Shores, where students from the Business School and film and production students from the Faculty

of Art, Design and Social Sciences came together to add real value to the project.”

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.

Link to the video: [stronger shores 3.mp4](#)

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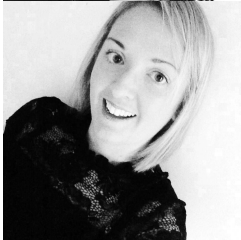
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