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Thousands tuned into inspiring programme at Design for Planet Festival

It's just over a month since festival fever gripped Northumbria after the University partnered with the Design Council for the 2022 Design for Planet Festival.

Almost 7,000 participants registered for the online event across two days in November, providing more than 40 virtual events and live broadcasts, to coincide with COP27.

The aim of the festival was to harness the power of the UK's design and business communities to create ways out of the climate crisis, while more than 60 guest speakers from disciplines including energy, food waste, biodiversity, supply chains and design, were on hand to share ways that participants could take action as individuals.

Originally planned as a hybrid festival with in-person events due to take place at the University, the [Design Council](#) team were forced to move the entire programme online in response to the announcement of rail strikes just weeks before the event.

But that didn't deter Northumbria staff and students from going ahead with a carefully curated schedule of activities which ran in parallel with the online festival to embrace the key themes of the event.

Dr Heather Robson, Head of Northumbria School of Design, said: "Our students and staff took part in a series of Design Sprints, organised as part of the event, which were aimed at finding solutions to climate-focused design problems. Students from Fashion, Industrial Design and Communication Design programmes also acted as illustrators, capturing the discussion and actions proposed.

"There was a real buzz in the School of Design, where we had an exhibition of work by Design, Fashion and Architecture students in the Foyer, including the Northumbria University Climate Action Network (NUCAN) group of students from Architecture and the Built Environment who are passionate about taking a sustainable, design-focused approach to their work.

"There was also open access to the Presentation Hall for staff and students to collectively view the entire festival programme."

Tapping into the [Architects Climate Action Network](#), a movement of individuals within the sector committed to taking action to address climate and ecological issues, NUCAN was founded by four dedicated Architecture students.

"What we hope to do through groups like this is normalise sustainability in design and hope that we can support people like ourselves to start off our careers with that commitment in mind," explained Finley Hoggard, one of the

founding members of the group.

Speaking of the opportunity to share ideas with like-minded people through the Design for Planet Festival events, fellow NUCAN group member, Jaya Kyne, added: “Tackling a huge issue like climate change can seem daunting but when it’s broken down into steps we can take as individuals, it’s easy to see that we can make a difference.”

A virtual workshop run for students by members of the [Design Declares](#) campaign group was followed by a practical banner printing session for those involved.

One of the workshop participants, Graphic Design student Hajer Allenqawi, said: “The workshop gave us time to pause and reflect a lot on what sustainability means to us and how we might want to share that message. The fact that Northumbria was involved with an event like the Design for Planet Festival really sends out a positive message for us all to do what we can.”

The festival activity will be the subject of a number of special episodes of Northumbria School of Design’s own podcast, [Designamite](#), led by Senior Research Assistants Helen Simmons and Dr Nkumbu Mutambo. The first episode, available later this week, features views from members of the Design School community on how design practice and education can be a method of taking action on the climate emergency.

Professor Steven Kyffin, former Pro Vice-Chancellor for Business and Enterprise at Northumbria, gave a welcome speech at the online event alongside Minnie Moll, Design Council Chief Executive.

Minnie said: “The success of this year’s Design for Planet Festival was strengthened greatly by our partnership with Northumbria University. From student illustrators to Steven Kyffin’s welcome speech, their contribution helped us to reach thousands of people, many of whom Northumbria students.”

A permanent record of the event is being created by the Design Council team in the form of a specially-commissioned zine publication which will feature images and work produced by Northumbria staff and students.

The 2023 Design for Planet Festival is due to take place in October in partnership with the University of East Anglia.

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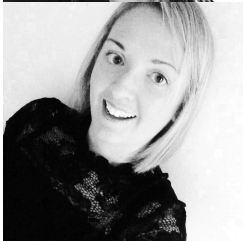


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