

The [triple] bottom line

The newsletter for Environment students and applicants

NOVEMBER 2013

www.york.ac.uk/environment



WELCOME

The Environment Department was established in 1992 and has grown rapidly ever since.

The quality of our three core degrees – Environment, Economics and Ecology, Environmental Science and Environmental Geography – is demonstrated by a satisfaction rating of 95% in the 2013 National Student Survey and by the high proportion of students transferring onto our new Integrated Masters (MEnv) programmes, which are running for the first time this year.

So popular is the department that we've outgrown our home and will be moving to a state-of-the-art new building in 2015. I look forward to updating you on this exciting development over the coming months.

Professor Colin Brown
Head of Department

NEW HOME ANNOUNCED FOR ENVIRONMENT DEPARTMENT



The Environment Department will be relocating to spectacular new, purpose-built teaching, office and laboratory facilities in a £12 million investment by the University. The project, which is scheduled for completion in 2015, marks the next new and exciting phase of environmental teaching and research at the University of York.

The Department started life at the University 21 years ago, housed in a handful of temporary Portakabins near to the Biology Department. The dynamism and hard work of the original founding staff and students helped the department to grow until in January 1998 it moved to its current home in the centre of Campus West, adjacent to the Information Centre.

Now, after 15 years of further rapid expansion in student numbers, staff and laboratory space, the Department has outgrown its accommodation and has embarked on a £12 million expansion plan to create a new, purpose-built building. This will house state-of-the-art science and physical geography laboratory facilities along with new teaching and innovative social spaces, all designed to enhance teaching, learning and research.

The building will house the Environment Department, the Stockholm Environmental Institute York, the York Environmental Sustainability Institute, and BioArCh, a research group covering aspects of biology, archaeology and chemistry.

THE CULTURAL VALUES OF TREES

The Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) is helping the Government to improve the health of UK woodlands.

Through a series of projects developed in partnership with FERA, the Food and Environment Research Agency, the Institute is making recommendations to tackle the increasing numbers of pests and

invasive diseases threatening UK trees.

The project team, which includes geographers, ecologists and citizen science experts, has already completed one project on Dutch Elm management in Sussex and is currently undertaking follow-on work across the country.

RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Urban pollution monitoring

The University of York is launching an innovative 3.5m Euro project which will use new technologies to improve the understanding of urban pollution and its effects on human health and the environment.

York researchers working on the four-year project – Cutting-Edge Approaches for Pollution Assessment in Cities (CAPACITIE) – will harness a wide range of technologies including mobile phones, miniaturised sensing devices, and robotics to monitor different forms of pollution.

The results of the project will be reported in 2017, when the University will also host a major international conference on pollution in cities.

Antarctic ice channels

A team of UK scientists, including experts from the University of York, have discovered huge ice channels beneath a floating ice shelf in Antarctica.

At 250 metres high, the channels are almost as tall as the Eiffel tower and stretch hundreds of kilometres along the ice shelf. The channels are likely to influence the stability of the ice shelf and their discovery will help researchers understand how the ice will respond to changing environmental conditions. The findings are published in Nature Geoscience.

The researchers used satellite images and airborne radar measurements to reveal the channels under the ice shelf.

Polar bears and microalgae

Whilst the sun shone on Yorkshire this summer Dr Claire Hughes (Lecturer in Environmental Chemistry) was amongst snow fall, sea ice and polar bears on a research cruise in the Arctic.

The aim of the work was to establish if Arctic microalgae use elements such as bromine and iodine to defend themselves against environmental stress. The research was part of a larger research council funded project studying aerosol-cloud interactions and feedbacks through ship- and aircraft-based measurements.

The dramatic backdrop of the Greenland coastline and polar bear cubs leaping between ice floes set the scene well for this very productive research campaign.

A €3.5m project led by the Professor Alistair Boxall will use new technologies to improve the understanding of urban pollution and its effects on human health and the environment.



95% RATING

The Environment Department has made significant improvements in key elements of the National Student Survey this year.

Our overall approval rating has increased to 95% and 94% of final year students on our undergraduate degrees agreed that the teaching was of good quality.

We were pleased to see that 99% of our students thought that staff were good at explaining things, as we strive to make our teaching programmes topical, interesting and relevant for today's workplace.

We aim to continue this improvement and would like to thank all of our students for taking the time to provide us with valuable feedback.

NEW STAFF



Julia Touza Montero has recently joined the Department. She is an Environmental economist with research interests in exploring environmental problems driven by economic factors, and evaluating the strategic behaviour of natural resource users/managers in a temporal-spatial context. Julia studied for her MSc and Ph.D. here in York, before working in Germany and Spain. She now returns to the Department, and will be teaching various economics courses.

RRS James Clark Ross, home to Dr Claire Hughes during her recent Arctic research



ICELAND FIELDTRIP

In June, the inaugural field-trip to Iceland took place for the new third year module: 'Glaciology and Volcanism in Iceland'.

21 students took part in a fantastic week of activities, which included working on the lava fields of Iceland's most active volcano (Hekla), looking at debris and melt rates

on the Solheimajökull glacier, exploring basal ice on the Svinafellsjökull glacier, and investigating the impacts of an enormous outburst flood.

Students also visited multiple waterfalls, a stunning glacial lagoon, volcanic craters, geysers and many other memorable sites.

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