

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE NEWS 31

New Heritage Ecosystem Impact Assessment methodology uses local knowledge to address concerns over Cambridgeshire rail project

The University of York's Heritage for Global Challenges Research Centre (HGCRC), in collaboration with colleagues from the University of Cambridge's Heritage Research Centre (CHRC), has released the results of a pilot project intended to test the results of a new "heritage ecosystem impact assessment" (HEIA) methodology. The project has resulted directly in knowledge intended for practical application.

The HEIA prioritises the lived experiences and insights of local communities (both human and non-human) over solely top-down metrics such as highly technical measures of air pollution or ecosystem integrity used in standard impact assessment methodologies. The pilot project tested the HEIA methodology within the context of the East West Rail, a new rail line connecting Oxford and Cambridge. Researchers, who interviewed over 80 Cambridgeshire residents, found that a community's lived experience of a landscape is incredibly significant, and if this relationship is damaged or broken, it can have lasting consequences.

Dr Tanja Hoffmann, Research Fellow with the HGCRC and the study's lead author said: "The potential loss of habitat for the critically endangered barbastelle bat is a good example of what we mean by making a region's heritage ecosystem more visible. It is not just about the bat and the threat to its habitat, it is about the relationship people have with it, relationships that span over generations.

This isn't a one-way relationship either; as much as a community may



feel connected to the bats, the bats are also connected to humans. An individual might use bat behaviour to understand the changing environment, or in their storytelling about the local community to young children, but a bat will also rely on humans to navigate their world, such as using a hedgerow that someone has planted to map out their foraging path.

If you start to negatively impact the relationships that people and other species are most invested in, the result is development that

affects both the wellbeing of the community and the places they care about and depend upon.

The loss or undermining of these relationships has a huge knock-on effect for both local biodiversity and the mental health of residents."

The **study recommendations** highlight how the active exchange of knowledge between the University's research, community insights, and project developer can be combined to achieve decisions for a more sustainable future.

UNLOCKING POTENTIAL: SBS and Make UK driving knowledge exchange across campus

The University of York's institutional membership with MakeUK, the prominent voice for UK manufacturing, offers significant opportunities for external engagement. The School for Business and Society (SBS) has notably leveraged this partnership for dynamic knowledge exchange.

Benefits for research, teaching, and employability

Make UK's extensive network connects SBS's academics directly with industry leaders, allowing academics to validate hypotheses with real-world insights and identify emerging areas for future inquiry that are relevant not only to advance academic debates, but above all to shed light on practices that can shape organisations' behaviour.

These strategic connections are yielding other tangible results. For example, Make UK members have provided formal support for research projects and Make UK-supported networking events are sparking new project ideas and collaborations.

But the benefits don't stop there: this powerful partnership is also enriching SBS's teaching and enhancing student employability. Make UK is a key source of guest speakers and masterclasses, bringing industry perspectives directly into undergraduate modules. For instance, the module on Business Consultancy benefited meaningfully from the engagement of various Make UK member organisations: they provide real industry projects ("at least five new companies were involved this year alone", Dr Upton). These projects were some of the best projects we have seen in this module over the last five years, providing an excellent student experience.

Furthermore, hearing figures like Rachel Reeves discuss "defence as the foundation of economic growth" (Make UK annual conference) offers a powerful example of where



business meets society in the current geopolitical context, bringing theory to life for our students.

This engagement also strengthens the School's connections with regional employers, a valuable asset when promoting their educational programmes to prospective students and recruitment agents for undergraduate admissions. Dr Townley was able to reach out to both ETL Fluid Experts and Topp & Co. Great Britain via Make UK, two organisations that contributed to his project on wellbeing support; however, with his employability hat on, he admitted that the relationship with them can be further nurtured and possibly lead to employability opportunities for SBS students. Direct connections with companies can lead to exclusive internship, placement, or graduate scheme opportunities, which may often not be widely advertised.

A mutual exchange for future growth

We encourage all departments across the University to explore

the potential of our Make UK institutional membership; SBS stands as a testament to its value in translating strategic engagement into impactful research, enriched teaching and enhanced student opportunities. Make UK members have also consistently shared positive feedback after setting student projects, delivering guest lectures or contributing to research.

Please get in touch with Professor D'Ippolito if you wish to learn more about SBS's engagement with Make UK or contact the Regional Membership Manager Annette Hobson (ahobson@makeuk.org or 07958224633) for specific queries on Make UK.

Professor Beatrice D'Ippolito, Director of External Partnerships and Engagement, with the contribution of **Dr Karolos Papadas**, **Dr Bob Townley**, **Dr Michelle Upton**, and **Dr Jaqueline You**.

THE RESEARCH ROOM PODCAST

In July this year, the York Trials Unit podcast “The Research Room” officially launched!

The idea for “The Research Room” came from two of York Trials Unit’s (YTU) researchers, Lucy Atha and Janine Heeley. As a podcast fan, Lucy had always thought that clinical trials would make a great podcast subject, and that people would love to hear about all the different studies going on.

After developing their idea, Lucy and Janine wrote to the Enhancing Research Culture Working Group and were successful in securing funding for their start-up costs.

As well as providing a brilliant opportunity to share YTU’s excellent and interesting research, it shines a spotlight on talented staff. Lucy and Janine also hope that the podcast will help potential participants learn about research and how they can be involved, and provide a way to connect with researchers for collaboration.

Brand new episodes are released regularly, where Lucy and Janine speak to YTU staff and external collaborators to find out about the variety of projects YTU are leading, from surgical interventions to mental health support



programmes, as well as insights into trial methodology.

Published episodes are available on all major podcast platforms, including **Spotify**, **Apple Podcasts**, **Amazon Music** and **YouTube** and can also be accessed from their website www.theresearchroompodcast.com

They would be keen to include a few special feature episodes interviewing researchers from other groups at the University about their health projects.

If you are interested, please contact Lucy and Janine at ytu-pod@york.ac.uk



YORK TRIALS UNIT: LEADING THE WAY IN HEALTH AND CARE RESEARCH

York Trials Unit (YTU), based within the Department of Health Sciences, is a **UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC)** registered trials unit and one of the UK's leading centres for the design, conduct and analysis of randomised controlled trials. Established in 1996, YTU undertakes national and international scientifically rigorous **trials** in a range of subject areas including surgery, mental health, musculoskeletal disorders, social care, education and public health.

The multidisciplinary team of over 140 staff consists of experts in trial design and conduct, data management, software design, statistics, health economics, qualitative research, methodological research, patient and public involvement and research inclusion. These staff are currently working in various

capacities across approximately 80 studies.

YTU has successfully adapted its trial expertise gained primarily within the NHS, to any clinical or non-clinical health and care field, such as the police, the criminal justice system and schools.

In 2024, the unit was successful in 18 grant applications totalling nearly £20 million, commenced or continued recruitment across 27 studies, and completed 13 others.

Their research has found that **surgery is not helpful for proximal humerus (upper arm) fractures**, voucher schemes are **effective at halting smoking in pregnancy**, and behavioural activation **prevents loneliness among older adults**. It has also challenged the use of an **off-label drug to treat osteoarthritis** and demonstrated

that the provision of slip resistant footwear with a Health and Safety Executive 5-star rating **reduced slips in NHS staff in the workplace**.

YTU lead one of the eight **NIHR Research Support Service (RSS) Hubs**, which provides advice and support to develop funding applications within the remit of NIHR nationally. In addition, with Newcastle University, YTU leads the national collaboration on horizon scanning for methods research. Several YTU staff share their expertise as members of research funding panels and provide advice to the Cabinet Office on trial design and analysis. YTU also delivers Master's level modules on the department's postgraduate courses, supervises dissertations, and supports pre-doctoral, doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships.

